

Journey's of an ODST

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Summary: Follows a young man on his way to becoming a fully fledged ODST and the missions he is sent out on, the fights just get harder and harder...

## 1. Chapter 1: Beginnings of Change

**\*\*Journey's of an ODST\*\***

**\*\*Part 1: Beginnings of Change\*\***

It was dark outside, but the nights sky was clear of any clouds, different galaxies could be made out, sparkling like precious jewels.

It was a sight to behold that was for sure, a sight i wouldn't see much more of if i was lucky, whilst the place had somewhat of an attraction to it, living in one of the outer colonies that wasnt that big got boring fast, the only options we had after school was to work in agriculture or work in factories.

Of course i'd opted for the 3rd option and enlist in some department of the UNSC, i wasn't sure what yet, but i knew thats where i wanted to be.

Rumour had it that we were winning a war, i wanted in on that, heck people thought i was crazy for it, though maybe i was crazy? Ah well they could think what they wanted.

Just over 4 hours until i would be meeting with the enlistment officers, and i just couldn't sleep, im not sure whether it was nerves or excitement.

Without much thought i dozed off, dreaming about what i would be doing when i got out there.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>4 Hours later:<strong>

"Bleep Bleep Bleep" the alarm clock screamed out.

I hit it and it went silent, but i was wide awake, surprisingly for me anyway, i slipped out of bed and went and got ready. My dad was already calling after me downstairs as i hopped in my boots.

"Coming!" i Shouted, whilst stumbling out my bedroom door.

By the time i had gotten downstairs, he was already waiting in the car, that stern miserable look he always had plastered on his face. He wasn't best pleased about me going into the forces, but in fairness what father would? He would get over it in time though, at least thats what i kept telling myself.

The car journey to city hall wasn't the most pleasant one, we mostly sat in silence and when one of us did talk it was brief and to the point, god i wouldn't miss this.

My father had been like this ever since him and my mother split up 3 years ago, but it was his own doing, he kept disappearing as soon as times got tough, and well i don't know the full story but i think it ended up with him apparently seeing some other woman, but as i say i don't know for sure. Regardless all he did was moan at me and complain whenever i was in sight, so heading off to the UNSC forces was ideal, i'd make something of myself and not only that i'd be away from him.

He pulled in, rather sharply at that, outside the city hall, posters emblazened outside of it all about UNSC recruitment.

"Right, here you are, i expect i may or may not see you in a little bit" he abruptly said.

"Yeah thanks for the lift, i will phone you when i can to let you know whats happening" i replied swiftly, whilst hurrying out the car.

I shut the door behind me and he drove off, further into town, no doubt to spend another day boozing with his friends, so i highly doubted i would infact see him again, at least not until late.

I headed up the steps and into the hall, recruitment officers sat behind desks, amazingly hardly anyone else was there apart from them. Each one in their uniforms, Navy, Marines, Army, Rangers and a general enquiries desk with just a UNSC informant sat behind it, looking rather bored.

A man dressed in camo approached me from the left, startling me at first, but i soon settled when he turned to talk to me.

"So son, what are you looking for with us today?" He asked me, quite nicely for a man who was 6 foot something and built like an ox.

"Well, i'm not really to sure, i know the UNSC is where i want to be but what section i haven't decided yet." i answered trying to sound

as enthusiastic as possible.

"Well lets have a chat and see what we can come up with, yeah?" The man asked. "I'm Staff Sergeant Mike Ferrow, i used to be active in the Rangers, but my battle time has come and gone, now i'm here to recruit fresh blood, so you say you don't know what you want to do? Well are you looking to be involved in ground battle or air and space?"

"Definatly ground battle sir, i don't think im cut out for flying and being in charge of all that stuff." I replied, starting to think now.

"Well, thats the Navy out the way, theres a few things i can suggest, for pure kickass ability, Rangers all the way, for general fighting on the ground the Army is your friend, for venturing out in vehichles and the like Marines is a good option or... no no." He stopped himself.

"They all sound good sir, but whats the or, you were going to suggest something, im keen to be on the ground but the 3 there, i dunno something just doesnt attract me to them." I replied, trying to provoke an answer as to what else the man was suggesting.

"Well, there is another option" He said cutting down to a whisper and taking me to one side, "Its an elite group of men, very few make it through the training, but if its what you want then i can put in a good word and application."

"I'm interested please do tell me what it is sir" i replied also whispering.

We stopped talking as a cleaner barged out the room to the right of us, obviously a room used for conferences of some sort. She ambled aimlessly around us, obviously trying to nosey in on what we discussed. Staff Sergeant Ferrow gave her a look that would probably kill someone, and she quickly hurried off into an elevator to clean the higher floors.

"Where was i? ah yes, well i'm sure you know your stuff about the UNSC, now the branch i have in mind, as i said very few ever make it, but i think its what you want and need, they are the ODST's" he told me, seeming rather keen himself.

"ODST's!" i exclaimed, alot louder than i intended

"Shhh, keep it down, them schmucks in there, well lets say, they don't exactly like the ODST's mainly for the fact they are much better soldiers than them, never known why, i respect them, on the battlefield you pray for them to jump down with you" He said sort of veering into his own dream world.

"Sir, you really think it could be what i need?" i questioned, wanting to be sure about this.

"Indeed i do son, now whats your name you havent said?" he asked back

"Hill, Steve Hill, Sir" i answered.

"Excellent, a pleasure to meet you Mr Hill, you and me may well be seeing alot more of each other" He said offering his hand.

We shook hands and i then proceeded to fill in the appropriate paper work in private with Ferrows. All done i was told to head home and i would be collected in 3 hours and leave for a UNSC Pelican which would transfer me to a frigate above the planet, from there i was told i would head to a training base set up on Earth.

3 hours! could you believe that, i knew i'd be gone soon, but i expected like a week or so, not 3 hours, damn they must've been keen to get me on board.

Whilst i walked to the nearest shuttle station to get a shuttle home, i rang my father, useless as ever it went to voicemail, so i left him a message saying what had happened and how i was leaving i also left my goodbye's on there to, he would be too drunk by the time i was leaving to realise anyway.

Unlike the journey there, the Shuttle ride home was rather more pleasant, not just because 3 beautiful girls had sat down in front of me and blushing as i checked them out, but also because soon i would be one of the most elite soldiers there is!

I dreamt of becoming a hero, and now i was on my way there, i smiled to myself feeling somewhat content for the first time since my mother and father had been together.

\* \* \*

><p>I rushed around my room, packing all the things i could into my 2 duffle bags, one had clothes in and the other contained more clothes aswell as my personal memoirs of home.<p>

"Right, all done" i said to myself.

"Sir?" a voice called out from downstairs.

oops, i must've left the front door open. I hurried downstairs to be greeted by a UNSC messenger dressed smartly in his dark green suit with a few medals also on his jacket. He was a rather young looking man, no scars of any note on his face, he had short military hair and looked rather nervous, as i was alot better built than him.

"Mr Hill i presume?" he questioned

"Yes thats me" i replied

"Excellent, i'm Private Andy Marshall, i'm your transport to the Pelican, oh and i've been given this which you must go and put on now" He said handing over the black combat trousers, boots, and long sleeved combat shirt, all emblazened in places with UNSC in white.

"Right, well if you want to wait down here while i get suited and booted" i said showing him the sofa just across.

He did so, closing the front door behind him.

Meanwhile i ran upstairs, and took off the smart clothes i had put

on, i jumped into my new combat outfit, it smelt of new fabric but damn it looked good, how on earth did they know my size though? The combat trousers even came with a black combat belt that completed the look, whilst the combat shirt hugged my torso showing the vague outlines of my muscle toned body underneath.

My first thought was how the chicks are gonna dig this look!

Happy with everything i grabbed my 2 duffle bags and took one last look at my room, the room that i had lived in for the 16 and a bit years of my life, just turning 17 i cant say i wasn't a bit glum at saying goodbye but this was a new chapter in my life and i certainly wasn't gonna give up on it now.

I headed downstairs, and saw Private Marshall already waiting at the front door.

"I'll take them Sir" the Private said, reaching out and taking the bags.

For a weedy looking young man he didn't have any trouble carrying my belongings.

I followed him out, and locked the house behind me, and then proceeded to the vehicle, the car in question was a UNSC Warthog, but without the big gun on the back it was just a transport version.

"Shotgun!" i called laughing, as i was the only one there with the Private, it got a laugh and a smile for the first time out of him.

i strapped myself in, and he started the ol girl up, i've never felt as if such a thing had so much power in it as this, i also couldn't help thinking if i would get a go in the combat version of one to!

We shifted off and left behind all i had known, a feeling of optimism washed over me as we headed down the road, i noticed that not many cars on the road sat in front of us but they rather let us past almost immediatly such was the intimidating nature of the Warthog.

We came off the freeway and headed through the city, we were headed for a small UNSC outpost which was here, Fort Unicorn, why it was called that i dont know but still.

As we drove slower through the busy city streets, people turned and looked at us, men mostly looking thinking wow look at that beast of a car before getting jealous seeing me in my tight top looking like the cool guy from a movie casually sitting there with my shades on that the Private had just given me. The girls though, well, they looked up just cos of the noise but then stared at me, with what i liked to think the look of lust and want, the Private next to me also seemed to be a ladies man as they whistled and waved to the both of us.

He seemed a tad embarassed but, i told him he should enjoy it, not many men get to be in as nicer position as us as to have girls after us, he'd said amen to that and given the girls a little wink and a wave, unknowingly we had done it at exactly the same time and made a couple of girls blush and giggle at a shuttle stop.

We continued on our way through the city, the Skyscrapers on both sides of the street making us feel small and insignificant, whilst also towering over almost every other building in the city, this city in question being New New Jersey though how it was a city i dont know as for the name, don't ask, whoever names the places weren't very original to say the least.

We made a left into a quieter road, ahead of us was Fort Unicorn, UNSC sign emblazened across a bridge before the guard gates.

As we approached, the guard at the gate gave a nod to Private Marshall and shot me a look, he must've guessed i was in for ODST related stuff as i was in an all black outfit. The cheek of him i thought as i gave him a cheeky grin back just to piss him off a bit more.

Private Marshall must've realised cos he chuckled to himself as i gave the guy that grin. Now inside however, the place was bustling a group of Soldiers were practicing marching drills to the left near the flag pole and some sort of hut, to the right there were 2 landing pads, with 2 Pelicans docked, one ready and waiting for me, the other sitting empty and having maintenance performed on it.

Ahead and slightly left was the Barracks, 2 buildings painted in dark green, across and to the right was the main buildings where all the officers and commanders were stationed, and situated right next to them was a tiny "Reception" building where we were headed.

We pulled up and Private Marshall instructed me to go inside and he would sort out my baggage. I did as asked and went in, i noticed on the door as i entered, the small plaque on the outside it read "Welcome to Fort Unicorn, New New Jersey, Jericho VII" Jericho VII being the planet we were on.

Inside was a small entrance room, a desk was stationed directly ahead, made of marble, in silver lettering across it was as usual UNSC, sat behind it was a pretty looking woman, she was Ensign Jennifer Brogan, i know this cos thats what her name plate said on the desk.

"How may i help you sir?" she asked still not looking up from some forms she was completing.

"I'm here for transportation for ODST training." I replied confidently

With this she looked up quickly, looking me up and down, somewhat shocked, do they not get many ODST trainee's i thought to myself.

"Well its a pleasure to meet you, you must be Steve Hill" she said standing up and offering me a hand.

"Please just call me Steve" i said shaking hands.

"Can't say we get many of your type through here, last one was 2 years ago just as i first started here" she informed me walking round the desk.

"Well what can i say i'm just something special" i said making the poor girl blush.

"Follow me" she gestured opening a door to the side "The Captain wishes to talk to you before you leave." she directed me through to the Captains office.

she knocked twice and a stern voice replied "Enter" she opened the door and we went inside.

"Sir, this is the ODST trainee Mr Hill" she said politely and informatively.

The captain spun round in his chair to face us.

"Excellent, that will be all Ensign Brogan" he directed.

She saluted and gave me one last look before leaving and closing the office door.

"Mr Hill, please take a seat" He gestured showing me a seat in front of his desk with his hand. I did so and got comfy.

"Now i hear you are to head off for specialist training or so i have been informed, i must say i don't get many opportunities to meet people who enter for this such as yourself." he explained "But anyway lets get to the reason for this chat, i have been instructed by my commanders back at HQ, that you will be transferred to a training base on Earth, this means you will be subjected to the highest possible training that we currently provide, or rather the ODST's provide. I am here to provide you with this and this"

He handed over my new set of DogTags, inscribed with nothing but my name and birthdate, and a combat knife, also inscribed with my name and also the letters UNSC above it.

"These serve a purpose i guarantee you, the tags to identify you should anything happen and the knife well, you can guess what thats used for." he informed me.

"Thank you, Sir" i answered.

"Now Pilot Yakov will be taking you from here, to the UNSC Gorgon, its a frigate class, and as of current is transporting recruits such as yourself across the various colonies to their training camps, your journey will take just over 4 weeks, that is all i have for you, good luck Mr Hill" the captain said.

"Thank you sir" i replied, i gave him a salute just like the young Ensign had done, afterall i was technically a soldier now.

I turned and left the office closing the door behind me and made my back down the corridor to the reception, Ensign Brogan saw me coming through the glass window in the door, and got back up to come see me.

"Your transport is waiting" she said and directed me out the main entrance and the landing pad.

Leaning against the nearest one was the pilot who would be flying me

up, Yakov, he looked of a sort of middle eastern decent with his darkened skin tone, he coolly watched me approach noting the black outfit.

He said nothing as i got into the seating bay of the ship, i took a seat nearest the exit hatch at the end, my bags obviously stored somewhere nearby.

He climbed in and we began our accention, i'd never flown before so this was also something new to me, it gave me a funny feeling but i soon settled and enjoyed the ride, the back hatch began to close as we climbed higher and higher, soon even those huge skyscrapers became little specs below, all the cars so small like tiny dots moving around.

From up here i could see the nearby shoreline of the city and the turquoise of the ocean, ah i hadn't actually ventured to the sea in ages, and nor would i get a chance now i thought to myself, as i did the ship jolted a bit as we began to push through the planets atmosphere, a momentary feeling of being light before the ships gravity cut in and made me sink back into my chair properly.

"Hey buddy, wanna pop into the cockpit a moment?" a thick accent stated over the ships comms.

i unstrapped and walked down the ship to the cockpits door, it slid open and i looked in amazement, the once night sky to me was there all around me, it looked stunning, slightly to the left was Jericho which also looked beautiful from out here, ahead of us a tiny dot at the moment was the UNSC Gorgon.

"Beauty of a sight ain't it?" Yakov asked.

"Like you wouldn't believe!" i exclaimed back

"Tell me, whats a young guy like u doing in heading for ODST?" Yakov asked me

"The challenge of being the best there is, you know of any ODST's?" i asked back

"nah haven't even known any trainee's before, you sir are my first, anyway u better take a seat we will be docking in no time" Yakov directed.

I headed back to my seat and strapped back in, i took a moment to sit and think to myself and what i was leaving behind. My father wouldn't care, and my mother well i don't even hear from her so she would still be oblivious to my whereabouts, i spose really i should inform her but when or how i would i wasn't decided on, i also had a sister, Kelly, who was actually already in the Navy stationed on some repair station near Reach, my dad was disgusted at her choice and had disowned her and then there was my older brother, Mark, he was 5 years older than me and had entered into running his own buisness, but unknowingly to my parents he had enlisted in the Rangers and been off fighting with the UNSC for the last 3 years. He always was a tough bastard, nice enough if hes your friend and what not, but if you got on the wrong side of him he would knock you block off, he was even better built than me and also taller, me a mere 5ft 8" and he was 6ft 2".



Sure enough as Yakov said, we began docking procedures, we would be docking in Bay 3 apparently. A simple hover dock with an air lock for quick drop offs, it made it easier than entering the fully fledged Bays where the ships own Pelican fleets were stored.

We Docked with a bit of a thud, i swear i heard Yakov curse, but it could of been just me, he exited to cockpit and got my bags out of the storage cell, he tossed them over to me.

"This is where we say our goodbyes kid, who knows maybe we will see each other around" he said as he slapped me on the back and went straight back into the cockpit.

Not one for goodbye's i thought judging by how quickly he left back to his seat, the hatch hissed and lowered allowing me to see the docking bay entrance for the first time, a porter took my bags and i followed him into the ship, the doors behind closing and locking so the Pelican could leave.

Well here i was, the UNSC Gorgon, my home for the next 4 weeks.

## 2. Chapter 2: Aboard UNSC Gorgon

**\*\*Chapter 2: Aboard UNSC Gorgon Day 1...\*\***

So there i was stood inside the entrance from docking bay 3, it was a smallish room with a couple of guards stationed next to what looked like a security station. All new people on board had to go through various checks, and as i stood there taking in my new surroundings they were already busy checking my 2 duffle bags.

Straight ahead was the security station and up above also directly in front was 3 big hardened windows, obviously strengthened to resist any blasts should anyone invade the ship through this bay, to either side on the same level as me were 2 machine gun nests, mounted, obviously as a first line of defense for the same reasons as the toughened windows.

"Well, come on son, we ain't got all day!" exclaimed one of the Soldiers, motioning me to hurry up.

I walked towards the security station, with nowhere else to walk anyway. The soldiers patted me down and checked my pockets for any items that could pose a threat, and after finding nothing they each nodded to each other and allowed me through.

My bags had since been moved on by the porter and apparently sent to my new quarters, i suppose i would find them later when i needed them. I began walking to the only door on the otherside of the security station, and stepped on through.

The doors closed behind me clicking shut, in front of me was a huge room, in front stairs led up and to the right, along side the stairs on my level, a waterfall type feature stood there, obviously used as some kind of decorative feature to add some sort of pleasing aesthetics. To the left there was an open door and a long corridor beyond with various other doors along it, the same directly to the right. Next to the bottom of the stairs were 3 elevators, i assumed

they all led to various places of importance.

A young soldier clad in armour approached me, noticing my confusion of where i was meant to go.

"Hey man, you okay? you look lost?" the young man questioned.

"Yeah, i'm just unsure of where i am meant to go, you couldn't help me could you?" i asked back.

"Sure, whats your name? maybe i can find you on the system" He replied.

"Steve Hill" i answered

"Okay man give me a sec, im Corporal Walter Kezlowski, but Kez will do" He answered whilst pulling out a computer type thing from his pocket.

He sat and typed and clicked away for a few minutes, before smiling.

"what you smiling at?" i asked curiously

"Nothing mate, just found you, so ODST training eh? nice!" Kez said

"Ah yeah, thought u guys hated us sort?" i asked back

"Well some of us do, but for us who have been in battle we have always wished for them to be there next to us, they are something else to see believe me!" he exclaimed.

"Well maybe sometime soon i will be dropping down alongside you" i replied enthusiastically, "so where am i headed now?"

"Well system doesn't have any orders or anything so you're welcome to join me for some experience in the target range?" he invited, "i know you ain't trained or got clearance to shoot yet but heck we only live once, come on follow me."

I began walking after Kez, we were headed for the elevator on the left, he was casually walking around with his assault rifle slung across his back and his M6 handgun in its leg holster. I'd been told when i signed up that i we weren't meant to carry our weapons with us but every soldier here had a weapon on them. Ah well every place ignores the little things i guessed.

We stepped inside the elevator, thankfully unlike the ones u step in in shopping malls back on my home planet Jericho VII there was no tinny horrid music playing, just the small hum of the elevator itself.

"To the bottom we go!" Kez cheerily exclaimed, whilst whacking the bottom button, he also hit a load of other floors aswell.

"Why on earth have you pressed for other floors?" i asked whilst laughing.

"Well, i generally like to piss off the Navy guys and girls, they

always look down on us lot, and cos they use the lifts more than us, they are bound to step in at some point and get a free tour courtesy of moi!" He cheekily replied whilst also laughing "Just dont miss our stop otherwise you will be the one getting the tour"

We both laughed as the lift hurtled and slowed.

"This is us" he said.

The lift stopped and we both hopped out, and started walking down the long corridor, it was dimly lit and only seemed to head towards one door at the end, it also seemed smaller and lower than any other corridor i'd ever seen.

"Don't worry about the light, the UNSC don't invest much in the lower part of the ship, we call it the dungeon because of it, still its almost always the location of the firing range which in my view, is the best part of the ship" Kez explained "Well that and the fine girls we got in the departments upstairs"

We got to the door but unlike the others this one didn't just slide open, Kez inserted his personnel card, and the light above the door went from red to green, there was a loud clunk and then the door opened.

Inside was no less than 50 ranges, the range must of ran the rest of the bottom of the ship as there were sniper targets way back just mere specks to the eyes. Before we could get to the shooting range we had to pass through the armoury checkpoint, it seemed quite behind the window in the wall, though guns were hung all over the place behind it, how i longed to just pick one up and have a go at shooting them.

Kez started banging on the toughened windows and shouting through the opening where i assumed the weapons were passed through.

An older looking man advanced from round the corner, he looked half asleep and as if he had been hitting some sort of alcholic beverage all day long, he had a well worn face, and short grey hair, he was also clad in battered old armour.

"Ah ello Kez" the man croaked "whos the kid?"

"This is our latest trainee, going to be an ODST apparently" Kez replied, leaving my name out of the question.

"ODST eh? not to keen on them myself but if he's with you he's good to go" the man replied

"Thanks buddy" Kez said "Listen could i ask a favour? i know its against regulations but u couldn't spare a couple of them training rifles for the boy could you?"

I couldn't believe it, Kez was getting me kitted out!

"Ah go on, i do owe u afterall, u did save me from that fight in the mess hall" the old guy replied, he then pushed through an assault rifle and a handgun.

"Cheers fella, here Steve grab them would you?" he asked pointing to

the guns on the desk.

I walked over and picked them up weighing them as i did so, the Assault Rifle was definatly required to have some skill, it felt heavier than anything else id picked up, granted this was the first gun i had picked up, but even so, the pistol was light and felt nimble.

There was a buzz and a gate that led to the range opened. I followed Kez through and we decided to go right to the end range, it was a double range obviously designed for snipers mainly, so they could have their spotter next to them practicing.

Kez and i both placed our weapons on the desk type thing seperating us from the firing zone.

"Ever fired a gun before?" Kez asked me whilst making sure his Battle Rifles chamber was clear, then shoving a mag inside.

"Nope, can't say i have, closest i've come is one of them new visual game simulators, you know where u go in and the room goes from being black to making a 3D world around you?" i replied "its pretty neat but im guessing its pretty far from the real thing"

"Well it gives a basic idea of what to expect, i mean i've used one before but yeah it's nothing like the real thing" Kez answered.

I picked up the M6 pistol first, i decided if i was going to start anywhere it would be small and then ease my way in, it was a bit battered and had obviously been well used, but i didn't mind i would be issued with my own stuff once i'd completed training back on earth.

"Right, lets give u a few pointers, always make sure the chamber is empty, just pull back on that" he said whilst showing me with his hand gun "then once you have done that, give the mag a firm push into the gun itself, try and do it in one swift motion, you'll hear and feel a nice click when its in"

I did as i was told and sure enough there was a nice sounding click.

"Right, now then, at the moment its got its safety on, just flick that switch there to the downward position and its then a live firearm" Kez said, emphasising the word "live", "Now when you aim down range, make sure you line them iron sights up, you want them to be level with the front one on your target"

I flicked the safety off, and took a stance with the gun pointed down range, i'd seen enough war movies and such on how to stand when firing, Kez was a little impressed with that, i looked down the iron sights, making sure they were level, before eventually lining up the front one on the target. The target in question was like some sort of pig thing in a suit that stood on two legs, i didn't know what it was but it was ugly as hell.

"okay mate, just squeeze the trigger when you want" Kez said whilst now aiming down range at his target a much further away one than mine.

I squeezed the trigger, but missed and hit the white bit of the target with nothing on, i laughed but also slightly annoyed i must've of looked like a complete noob. Kez meanwhile fired and destroyed the head of his target with a 3 round burst.

"I saw what you did, listen don't just pull the trigger, gently squeeze it, treat it as if its the love of your life, you know just gently caress it, sooner it gets faster and comes more naturally, give it another go" Kez said, he was being rather more helpful than anyone had been so far to me onboard this ship, but then again he was also the only one who i had actually talked to since being here.

I retook my stance and aimed as i did last time, now as Kez had said, i gently squeezed the trigger, the gun fired and the recoil took me a little by surprise again, but for the lack of the recoil, the bullet hit the target, not great but it blasted through the stomach area of the target.

"Whey! there we go!" Kez said giving me a pat on the back "not the best shot in the world, but its a hit and its the best hit i've seen from someone who hasn't fired a gun before"

I felt rather proud and pleased with myself, beaming a smile.

We continued to shoot, and i stuck with the handgun for a while, i began hitting the target more consistantly but as expected my aim was all over the place. Kez began urging me to give the Assault Rifle a go, so i decided i might aswell give it a go.

I picked it up, and with help from Kez checked the chamber, to our surprise it had been left with a round in it, so we cleared it and inserted a new mag.

"Practice holding it first mate before we do anything else, guarantee you will need to be able to feel comfortable with this baby, recoil is a bitch!" Kez said

"How come you don't use one of these?" i asked whilst sort of trying to get comfortable with holding it.

"Just not accurate enough for me, i like a nice poised gun that i can easily shoot a Covenants head off with" Kez replied

"A Covenant? never heard of them" i said now interested to know what that was.

"Oh crap i forgot you don't know, well they are a race of alien, well a few races of aliens that have gathered together and want to wipe us out apparently, at the moment thats who we are fighting hence the sudden recruitment push" Kez explained "I'm not meant to of said anything so please keep it to yourself until you are told by higher command durin training"

"It's safe with me mate, don't worry" i said.

"You gonna fire that now or what?" Kez joked "my grandma walks faster than you shoot and shes dead"

We roared with laughter, i managed to stop laughing and then turned to face the new target down range that Kez had put down there.

I went through the same procedure as before though this gun seemed to lack proper sights so it was harder to aim than the hand gun. I squeezed the trigger, and the recoil lifted the gun almost instantly i had to fight to keep it down. A few rounds tore into the target amazingly hitting the chest and neck area of what Kez had said was an Elite from these Covenant things, but the rest of the rounds went off to the sides.

"Not bad fella, keep going" Kez said as he to started firing down range.

We stayed there for hours just shooting and having a laugh, we even double teamed the bigger targets and he started to teach me a few moves and codes for the battle field, he really was helping me an awful lot.

Unknown to us the UNSC Gorgon had entered slipspace and was well on its way to dropping the first batch of rookies to their respective training camps, we meanwhile just continued shooting targets.

**\*\*Day 2:\*\***

We were just finishing up in the shooting range again when there was an almighty huge boom, followed by loads of secondary ones.

"What the fuck was that!" me and Kez both exclaimed steadying ourselves, luckily neither of us had been shooting when the blasts or whatever they were had gone off.

Suddenly the alarms started blaring out loud, these weren't just any alarms these were from what Kez had said the alarms that signalled immediate danger.

"Holy shit, we are being boarded!" Kez exclaimed, loading another mag into his Battle Rifle and Handgun "Load up kid, and stick with me!"

"Surely i'm not allowed to be using weapons!" i shouted back above more booms above.

"Take the guns kid, everyones in this fight including you now" Shouted the old guy from the armoury.

I did as was told and slammed fresh mags into the Assault Rifle and Handgun, i grabbed a leg holster from the side and clipped it to my combat belt and around my leg and put the Handgun in there, i then chucked the sling over me that the Assault Rifle had and shoved spare ammo in my Combat trousers empty pockets.

Just as we turned to head out the armoury the door got blown in and the armoury guy got blasted to hell with blue like plasma stuff.

"Crap!" Kez shouted and grabbed me into cover, we hunched down behind a load of crates and stuff.

"Right kid, heres what we do, we pick and choose our targets based on strength, if they are the small shits then take em by yourself, if we get them bigger bastards then god damn it we take them together!" Kez

said getting angrier and angrier.

There was a squawk from the other side of the crates, Kez popped up and fired, heard the sound of flesh being ripped apart by lead and a dull thud as whatever it was hit the floor.

He ducked back down and turned to face me, needless to say there was a look of fear on my face, and he must've noticed it, he tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to lay down cover firer whilst he moved to another piece of cover.

I Jumped up and squeezed the Assault Rifles trigger forcing whatever them things were in front into cover, some of my bullets hit something with a shield like thing on it as it shined when they just about caught it.

"Crap, Kez i think theres an Elite!" i screamed across to the man who was now behind new cover. He shot me a look, the look just basically screamed holy fuck.

He poked his head out, and then back in just in time to miss a load of enemy fire that flew through where his face had just been.

"You're spot on! Lets get the bastard!" He screamed manicly we both popped up and shot in the general direction of this towering creature, his rounds were hitting it spot on mine just seemed to pepper the general location, i was trying to fire in bursts to control the recoil, half my mag was gone.

"Loading!" Shouted Kez as he ducked back down.

I kept firing and the shield like stuff didn't seem to be there anymore, a few more rounds tore through its neck from my Assault Rifle it stumbled and collapsed on the floor, a puddle of purple goo which i assumed was its blood formed around the creature. Kez popped back up and was surprised to see the Elite downed.

"Fuckin ace mate! now lets finish these off" He said praising me.

We both jumped back up moving out from cover, he moved to the right and i moved to the left like he directed me to, we kept firing upon the little ones that were left, they seemed to be scared and tried running away, flailing their arms, but we werent taking that and rattled them off, Kez took out 4 of the 5 and i got the last as it ran out in front of me trying to avoid Kez.

"Clear Right!" Kez boomed.

"Clear Left!" i shouted clearly back.

We turned and checked upon the old guy from the armoury, he was gone, that purple stuff had torn clean through him and half his chest was missing aswell as part of his face.

"Damn, poor guy" i said, not really knowing what to say.

"A real nice guy, gone, this shit has got to stop" Muttered Kez, i chose not to ask what he was on about, but i was quickly realising there was alot more to this 'war' than what us public had been

told.

"Lets move" Kez said as he turned to the door that had been destroyed durin the fight, we took a side each and looked down the corridor, it was devoid of any life, the only thing down the corridor was the elevator, which in the circumstances could prove problematic to use.

We advanced down the corridor i mimicked Kez's slightly hunched more stealthy movements, finding also easier to aim whilst moving doing this. We got to the elevator, Kez told me to sit back and cover him whilst he opened it. He pressed the button and stood back, there was a bong, the doors opened but instead of a lift there was a little boom and fire and rubble as the lift exploded at the bottom of the elevator shaft. We both hit the the deck sheilding our heads.

"Holy cow, well guess we are using the emergency stairs" Kez said standing back up dusting himself off, i too was doing the same.

We made a right and kicked in a hatch together, the emergency stairs were indeed that and were locked off, we climbed through the hatch into the stair well and started to head upwards. These stairs however only led to the first floor above the firing range, that said it was alot higher than i thought.

It took us a full 15 minutes running to reach the floor the stairs led to, before we had to remove yet another hatch, we decided instead to pull it inwards as we didn't know what was on the other side, at least we got to catch our breath before we got through.

There was a gun fight going on far down to the left somewhere on the other side, we could only hear it though, we stepped out and found ourselves alone, this was the quarters of the engineers on board the ship it would seem, i hadn't been here before Kez hadn't shown me this far around the Gorgon.

"Er we'll go right and head for the stairs, we need to get to the bridge, well at least thats my emergency station during these things, so lets get a move on!" he said.

We began running at full pace, i matched him for speed surprisingly but i knew i wouldn't be able to to shoot at all whilst running. We made it round to the Stairs though before we did we peered out through one of the windows which allowed us to see out into space, we could only see a little but it looked like there were 2 Covenant cruisers there and all kinds of hell breaking loose out there, i had no idea where we were but we were definatly above a planet.

We stopped staring and started to run up the stairs, it was gonna be a long tough run but luckily i had taken fitness pretty seriously back home and was in fairly good condition.

20 minutes later we had made our way back to the main elevator area where i had originally met Kez, i knew the way to the bridge from here, all around us though soldiers had set up blockades to stop the Covenant forces reaching the elevators and stairs, there were injured and wounded men being treated by medics, one had both legs blown off, he was just screaming screams that a man should never make.

The ship had decended into just bloody gore, there was consoles



blowing our and power fluctuating all over, things were not looking good. We were almost at the bridge we had fought off a small group of them small pig like things in orange type suits. Amazingly i'd racked up 3 out of the 6, and saved Kez's arse as he had reloaded, i had never done this before but i had Kez's crash courses on the firing range for making it this far.

We rounded another couple of corners, Covenant forces hadn't made it this far, well not yet anyway. We kept running and came to the entrance to the bridge, there was a small squad of 6 soldiers keeping guard at the entrance they seemed relieved when they saw it was Kez though and let us through, i was given a few weird looks though and a few shocked looks i was carrying a weapon, well 2 in fact including the hand gun.

"Where have you been soldier!" Bellowed the ships Captain.

"Sorry sir, encountered enemy forces on our return from the firing range, Sir" Kez replied blunt and the point.

"Our?" the Captain questioned, before turning and noticing me in my all black outfit i'd been given back home, "You mean to say you have allowed a complete novice to use firearms around other members of this ship!" screamed the captain, this in turn caught the attention of the other members of staff on the bridge, all looking me and Kez up and down.

"Yes sir I..." Kez began.

"Don't yes Sir me! its irresponsible and against every regulation!" The Captain bellowed back.

"Excuse me! Captain! without that man there covering me and helping the other troops we could all well be dead! He saved my arse out there and we both took out various groups of Covenant, now we are here to protect you so don't you lecture me with all due respect Captain!" Kez Yelled back.

There was an eery silence fall over the bridge, no one had ever answered the Captain back before at least thats how it seemed, everyone just looked in astonishment, Kez stood Battle Rifle in his hands, looking as angry as i'd ever seen, possibly more so than when we had the fight against them alien assholes in the armoury.

"Well, er..." The Captain said, baffled and unable to think of anything to say.

"I'll do my job Captain, you do what you do here, and whether you like it or not, this guy is staying with me guns and all" Kez said before turning and instructing me to follow him back to the entrance to the bridge.

As we did so, someone from the front consoles flying the ship yelled out "Incoming Missiles from our right!" the ship shook violently before stabilising.

We joined the group of soldiers outside the bridge, they all looked in amazement at what Kez had said back there, a few smirked, Kez ignored them and helped finish off a baracade.

The Sergeant of the group was instructing them to count their ammo, and make sure they had full magazines, he obviously knew the Covenant would reach here at some point. Kez seemed to think otherwise and i followed him away from the group we headed back to the lobby where the stairs we had ran up earlier were, we would hold and fight here from what i guess. We weren't the only ones with this idea either there was a couple of squads amassing 20 soldiers already and waiting, the lifts they had knocked out so the Covenant only had the stairs to utilise.

I checked how much ammo and magazines i had left, i had just the one spare magazine for the Assault Rifle in my pocket and the one in the gun, and i still had all my handgun ammo. Kez meanwhile had restocked from a nearby ammo crate so i decided i should do the same, i didn't, however, know what magazines it took so Kez ended up chucking me some.

2 Soldiers came sprinting up the stairs screaming, "Incoming, enemies incoming!" they dived behind some crates at the top of the stairs and took up defensive positions.

Sure enough, they were soon followed, a couple of squads of those small things, and when i say a couple of squads they come in squads of 10 making for a total of 20 of them.

"Grunts!" Kez shouted, i was amazed this man knew so much, after all he was only a Corporal.

"Steve, get over there! you're the only one without armor here" Kez said, for some reason looking out for me as if i was his brother, then again we all technically were all brothers in arms.

As i took my position a Staff Sergeant ordered us to check our shots, and only shoot when we would hit, the Grunts are only cannon fodder or so i'd witnessed so far, relatively easy buggers to put down.

Sure enough without much trouble the Grunts were all laying spewed on the stairs, we all reloaded ready for the next wave, and it wasn't far behind.

A line of weird skeletal things with sheilds formed 2 lines all overlapping, it was almost impossible to a shot at them.

"Damn it fuckin Jackals" a soldier next to me muttered, before priming a grenade and launching it at them. The grenade got deflected and down into the lower lobby before exploding, still it must've hit and killed some things as there were a few blood curdling screams from Covenant soldiers below.

The 2 lines of jackals kept advancing with only a couple of them being picked off.

I took aim and peppered the front line of them, not having much effect as the line kept advancing to the barricade at the top of the stairs.

"Screw you mutherfuckers!" Screamed a soldier, just after he yelled that there was a loud woosh sound, and a Missile zoomed across the lobby and blew the entire 2nd line to pieces and also knocking down

the front line.

We all took advantage of this and blasted away at the former front line, and soon enough they were down.

"Reload men! There will be more!" the Staff Sergeant yelled at us all. "Corporal Kezlowski get over here, and you! ODSST boy, come here now!"

We both hurried over allowing other soldiers to take the places we left.

"Both of you i need to ask a huge favour of you, Corporal, consider yourself team leader of this young kid here, now heres what i want you to do, you are to head to the rear of the ship on this level, there is only another stair well and thats down that way, as far as i know they are holding strong like us so you shouldn't have any trouble" he paused.

"Once there, keep going, there will be one of the escape hatches with a couple of suits inside maybe even some armour for the kid, i want you to suit up and place this onto one of the enemy transport ships, not the docking pods the actual transports, do you understand that this is a mission that could get you both killed" The Staff Sergeant finished.

"Yes, Sir" Kez replied.

"I know its a big ask, but i'm sure Kez can give you a crash course out there, stay strong!" the Staff Sergeant said to me.

We headed off and i just had to speak to Kez about this.

"Kez, why the hell am i suddenly being dragged into everything?" i asked in between breaths as we ran.

"Well its what you signed up for isn't it? just think of it as a head start to your training, if you get that far, and besides you're the only one crazy enough to hang around with me all the time" He cheekily answered.

I shrugged and kept pace with him, we could hear gunfire ahead, meaning we were almost at the second lobby. Around the corner and there they were a slightly bigger force than at the lobby we had left from but doing an equally good a job.

We ran on past them getting barely a look from any of the soldiers there, the only one who did look was a pretty slim brunette who blushed slightly at the sight of 2 well built men running past.

"Pretty damn frickin hot, man i love this place for them girls" Kez said without thinking.

"Amen to that!" i said taking him by surprise, he obviously didn't think i'd heard him.

We came to the escape hatch, the pod had long since gone so it was just an access point to the outside of the UNSC Gorgon now, Kez chucked me a suit.

"Well well well Mr ODST, we have a proper ODST suit here!" he threw me the pieces of the all black armour, it looked beautiful and new, it looked aggressive and also somewhat attractive in a weird way.

I put it on and then slid on the Helmet, the silver visor blocking the outside world from seeing my face, as i slid the helmet into place the suit pressurized, i didn't realise the suits were completely air tight aswell, meaning i could go anywhere and have my own oxygen supply!

Kez grabbed a suit, not ODST mind you, general army space wear, good enough for combat aswell as suiting engineers if they needed to get outside. We were both suited up, i even felt half like an ODST now!

"Here take this and drop that shitty Assault Rifle" Kez said.

"What is it it?" I replied.

"An SMG, silenced, we might be needing to go stealthy on this if we are to get this planted on the transport" Kez answered, he also passed me a load of ammo for it to, i loaded it without thinking, damn i was catching on quick, but i'd never even flown til a few days ago and now im about to step onto the outside of the UNSC Gorgon and space walk? i was in way over my head.

Kez dragged me into the airlock and sealed the door behind us, i felt the room depressurising, and soon i was only held to the ship by the magnetic force in these boots Kez had given me.

"Right stay as close as you can to me, don't go jumping around out there though, otherwise you will just float off into space!" Kez warned.

We stepped outside the hatch, a HUD inside my helmet flickered on, i'd never expected that, there was some sort of arrow flashing to the left i turned and it moved to the center of my visor.

"Don't worry mate, that arrow is where we are headed" Kez said as if he had read my mind.

I gave a nod to show i'd acknowledged what he had said, i didn't know if my helmet was linked to the radio comm he had spoke to me through just then, but i soon realised it was when he said for me to slow my breathing. Slow my breathing? heck my heart was pounding i was literally about to shit myself, a puny human standing on the side of a UNSC ship in the middle of a war zone in space above some unknown planet.

We moved along the ship getting towards our objective, i looked down to see what i was walking on and we were actually walking across the bold white writing saying "UNSC GORGON" made me laugh a little, the fact that to any other ship they would clearly see 2 little dots moving across the side of a frigate, like ants on the side of an ant hill.

"Dude! What the hell are them frickin purple flying things headed toward us from the right?" I answered a little worried.

"Ah crap, Banshee's! Lets move!" Kez said.

We began sprinting as fast as our magnetic boots would allow green explosions around us, followed by bursts of blue, luckily all missing us, the Banshee's had to pull up before hitting the ship unlucky for one it didn't manage this intime and smashed into the hull of the UNSC Gorgon, the other as it pulled away got wiped out by one of the anti air defense guns on the side of the Gorgon.

500 meters to the bay where the Covenant transport ship was located, we were so close, yet so far at the same time. Following the Banshee encounter we just were not gonna stop running.

"Almost there, keep going" Kez said sounding out of breath, i was actually running ahead of him now, i dunno if it was because i'd kept myself in such good shape or whether it was the suits climate system changing to every condition, but i still felt good.

we headed lower on the ships hull, we were literally going to walk up and into the main loading bay, Bay 1, the ships fleet of Pelicans had long since left after evacuating all non-essential personnel, in their place the Covenant had parked a dirty purple transport ship which had done a few trips unloading that other worldly scum that seemed intent on cleansing us out of the universe.

We reached the bottom edge of Bay 1, Kez finally catching up, we paused and gathered out breath, amazingly we hadn't fired a single shot all the way here.

"Alright, heres the plan, you take the left side once we get inside, stay close to wall, not to close though incase of plasma grenades. I will take the right hand side of the hangar, we should be able to cover each other from each side, take your time over aiming, i know you haven't spent long with a gun but right now i need you to shoot better than ever. We will meet over the far side in the middle where the lift up to the landing pad the transport ship is on." Kez instructed

"Roger that, you better save my arse this time, i havent even fired a gun whilst being seperated from anyone yet!" i answered.

"Don't you worry, i got your back, just hope you still got mine" he countered "oh and if we make it through this i will personally buy you a drink and we will hit the club onboard and live like kinds, i can promise you that"

With that we nodded, and entered the bay walking through the force field which kept the oxygen inside the bay. Once through the field we deactivated the magnetic abilities of our boots so we could roam freely.

I Immediatly headed to the left and crouched down behind a huge tank, written on the side was "Scorpian: UNSC Gorgon", i thought to myself how we could of done with that kind of firepower in other areas of the ship.

I took a moment to check on Kez's where abouts i saw him screwing on a silencer to his Battle Rifle, i didn't need to do that as my SMG already had one attatched thank god as i would of been lost trying to put one on.

In the bay on this level, there were a few squads, 3 in fact, admittedly not doing much, 5 grunts 2 jackals and 2 Elites in each squad, this looked to be a lot tougher than first thought, and i literally didn't have much of an idea on what to do than point and shoot.

Regardless we were fighting for our lives on this ship and i sure as hell would do the best i could, even without training yet.

"Steve, look up a min buddy, can you see a Jackal sniper just above me on a ledge? i was about to take him but he walked back" Kez asked.

I looked up and sure enough there was a Jackal walking back and forth along the ledge, i scanned it for other Covenant but it seemed to be just the lookout.

"Roger that, i can see the Jackal" i replied.

"Excellent, right do us a favour and take him out, im covered by him and can't move much further" Kez asked.

I took a deep breath and sighed.

"You can do it mate, just remember what i have taught you so far" Kez said reassuringly.

I aimed up, my helmet aiding me by providing and enhancing my crosshairs as i looked down the guns sights, i squeezed the trigger, the gun fired just slight putt putt sounds as it sent a small burst of lead to the Jackal. The Jackal took the 3 round burst i'd let off straight in the head.

"Hell yeah!" i exclaimed down the comms "Headshot!"

"Frickin ace man, right lets move up" Kez directed.

My heart was pounding, but i was actually enjoying splattering these bastards.

Whilst i moved up undetected on my side Kez dropped all 5 grunts from the squad placed in front of him, he then popped one of the Jackals before ducking into cover to reload. With that i popped up and took out the other Jackal that was moving towards him, i shot its legs out and then a round somehow found the Jackals neck.

"Had you covered mate" i announced over the comms.

"Bloody hell, thanks mate" Kez announced sounding very thankful "didn't feel like becoming dog food just yet"

He turned and peered round the corner, only the Elites were left out of his squad whilst mine remained totally intact, though that might work better as there was still a 3rd squad sitting around the lift. The two Elites appeared oblivious to the fact that their squad was no longer with them, but they seemed to be talking some alien gibberish, before i knew it though they both dropped to the floor, 2 clean headshots from Kez.

"How the hell did you manage that?" i asked him.

"Shields weren't up they seem way to content for my liking the ugly gits!" He profusely exclaimed.

I advanced down my side with this knowledge, i decided upon the Elites first. I aimed and both were in line i just hoped bullets could penetrate two Elites heads at once, i fired two small bursts, blowing them both to oblivion, at the same time Kez took out the two Elites in the 3rd squad. I turned my attention to the two Jackals in my squad downed them after accidentally missing them first time, luckily i'd managed to hit them before they had raised any alarm.

Kez had worked wonders on the 3rd squad and had already downed them all, and then helped me by getting 3 of the 5 grunts, i mopped up the last 2 and joined him at the lift up to the landing pads.

"Nice work for someone who didn't know a gun from his dick 3 days ago" Kez said as i made my way over to him.

"Believe me mate, my dicks alot more dangerous than these guns, its nailed more girls than i have nailed Covenant with these guns here" i said countering the cheeky sods comment.

"Well you better teach me how to win over the ladies in that case, since you say you're so good" He replied chuckling to himself.

I laughed aswell, as we stepped onto the lift. It rose upwards, only going up one level as thats as far as it went. We quickly moved off the lift behind pillars.

"Clear Left" I boomed.

"Clear Right" Kez said we moved along to Pad 2, the enemy transport docked on it.

"Right, lets get this bomb planted and get the hell out of here" Kez said as we moved towards the Covenant transport.

We stepped over the Jackal i had downed for Kez a little while ago, i kicked the damn thing pissed off at what they were doing to us all.

"Team, have you bedded the plant yet?" the Staff Sergeants voice said over the comms.

"Just about too, why?" Kez replied.

"We have had reports that the Covenant cruiser is recalling its transports to return more troops, we have ourselves fallen back to the entrance to the bridge and team 2 from the far lobby are putting up a last stand at the lobby we used to hold" the Staff Sergeant replied a little intensity in his voice.

"Roger that!" Kez answered. The comms were cut, and it was just me and Kez again.

"Shits obviously hit the fan if they have fallen back" Kez seemed to say to himself.

He got the bomb attached to the ship, luckily just as the pilot started up and headed out the bay, oblivious to the current squads being dead all around his ship.

"Close call that was" I said breathing a sigh of relief.

"Yeah too close, come on lets get back and help them out." Kez said as we started to move again.

We ran back towards the lift we had come up on but instead decided to head back to the Bridge through the ship. We were at the far end of the ship, it would be a long run back to where we had started this mission.

We breached Bayl's doors back into the main corridor, and saw bodies of our own soldiers everywhere, aswell as Covenant bodies but mostly those of humans.

"Damn..." we both muttered at the same time, we looked at each other even though i had my helmet on so we couldnt see each others reactions, Kez for some reason still had his helmet on from our journey outside.

We stepped into the corridor, it was empty, and almost completely destroyed, bullet marks, dents, blood and explosions from plasma and grenades littered it all, barely any lights were working and the ones that were still sort of working only flickered at most.

Luckily for me my helmet activated some view thing which made it easier for me to see in the dark.

We kept moving in the direction of the bridge at a rather slow pace, checking our corners making sure we could get to cover if we got engaged.

We made it to the first stairs that Team 2 had been holding when we went to the air lock, we decided we would head up there.

As we did we encountered a group of Grunts sitting in the lobby at the top we dispatched them quickly with our silenced weapons. There was gun chatter still coming from the main lobby before the bridge so at least we knew that there were still some survivors.

"Staff Sergeant do you read?" Kez spoke into the comms.

We got nothing but silence.

"Staff Sergeant do you read? Corporal Kezowski here over" Kez repeated.

"This is acting team leader, Private Johns, the Staff Sergeant is gone, we are critical" Private Johns spoke, gunfire rampant in the background.

"Roger that, hold out for as long as possible, ETA 2 minutes" Kez said urgency clear.

Before he had even finished his transmission we had locked and loaded and were running as fast as we could down the corridors, a few



stragglers mainly Grunts and Jackals were sitting back, we made light work of them as we rushed to the mens aid, if the Captain went down the ship would activate an automatic self destruct mode and vent the the entire ship aswell.

"Don't FUCK with me!" Kez said as he pulled out his combat knife and severed the head of a Jackal that was about to shoot him. He then quickly threw the Knife straight into the back of an Elite in front of us. The man was crazy, but a damn good crazy at that.

I noticed an Elite to the right of Kez, it seemed to be giving orders over its own Comms, i sent 3 bursts, 3 bullets in each blasting its chest open killing the beast.

We were now at the top of the stairs just one corridor away from the bridge, we decided we would halt any reinforcement covenant for as long as possible to allow the remaining troops protectng the bridge to fight off the ones they were dealing with and regroup on us, again pushing the Covenant back.

I dived behind some plants and benches, and started laying down fire, whilst Kez found suitable cover behind which he did.

We took out as many Covenant as possible that were waiting to advance to the bridge, we lost count of how many we had actually killed. Soon enough the troops protecting the bridge advanced back towards us and were laying down more cover fire on the top of the stairs, all that remained of the boarded Covenant, well in this part of the ship, were 4 Grunts trying to make a run for it, but one of the troops that had been protecting the bridge blew them away with a shotgun.

"OOORAH!" the 5 remaining troops bellowed out.

"WOO Fuck yeah, we made it man!" Kez screamed at me.

I didn't know what to say, i was more in shock i'd survived, no training and to of only had a crash course from a crazy soldier who was a mad man, what can you say in all seriousness.

As we had a moment celebrating, there was an almighty supersonic boom from outside the ship. Big enough to really rock the UNSC Gorgon, our ship or what was left of it, shook violently for ages, before it subsided.

"What in gods name?" the soldiers questioned, all puzzled.

"Attention all hands, this is the Captain, scans show the ship as clear. We have succesfully destroyed both Covenant cruisers with one bomb. All hands report to the bridge immediatly" The Captain informed over the ships comms.

We did as we were told and advanced to the bridge, picking our way through bodies, and bits of bodies. The Bridge had obviously locked its doors as they were still closed when we got there, Kez inserted his clearance card and the doors unlocked and opened.

Kez, me and the 5 soldiers left all stepped inside, to something of a heroes welcome from the Naval staff and Captain on the bridge.

"You men are all heroes, each and every one of you, you put your lives ahead of ours in the sake of winning this war, for the good of humanity. We shall forever be indebted to you with our lives, i want it to be known now, that each and every one of you will be put forward for the highest award any soldiers can get, not least you Mr Hill, your courage and valour in the face of adversity is a quality that all of us should have instilled within us, i am in no doubt you will make one of the finest ODST's the UNSC has ever seen. Kez you are now officially promoted to Staff Sergeant, god bless that mans soul, you are the most adequate soldier i have at my disposal." The captain addressed us, he carried on addressing the other 5 soldiers, but me and Kez slumped into 2 seats near the Captains chair usually reserved for other high ranking officers.

I sat thinking to myself that this was gonna be a bitch of a clean up job, to even get this ship back in working order.

We still had engines however we didn't have any slipspace capabilities, they were to damaged for that. We decided to make for a repair station, a station that suddenly became familiar to me, we were near reach and my sister was on board the repair station we were destined for, man this would be one hell of a story to tell her i thought.

"Men, please get some rest we shall be docking within the next hour" The Captain told us.

We duly complied and made our way to the quarters, someone really should clear these bodies i thought to myself as we walked past dead comrades and alien scum, but that would be a task for the clean up crews when they got on board.

Back at our quarters on Level 14, i immediatly chucked my SMG and Handgun to the side on the desk provided in the room, Kez did the same over at his bed, i removed my helmet and mopped my brow of sweat, i gave him a look of thanks for the crash course which he had given me, it had undoubtedly saved my life and probably his a few times to.

i looked at myself in the mirror in my ODST armour i had been given, and noticed there wasn't any war marks on it at all, i'd actually made it through that without actually being hit! I counted myself lucky and took off the armour and placed it in the cupboard provided for armour and the like.

I turned around, i was gonna talk to Kez but he had already crashed out and was sound asleep, i knew i better do the same with just an hour or so until we docked there was only time for a nap, but a nap was better than nothing.

I lay down on my bed thinking about the things had done and how i had somehow survived, didn't take long however to drift off to sleep and soon i had dozed off.

### 3. Chapter 3: A Familiar Face

**\*\*Chapter 3: A Familiar Face.\*\***

I lay sound asleep whilst the UNSC Gorgon advanced, or rather limped

to the repair station on the other side of the planet below. Reach, the planet in question. Power fluctuated all the time, the engineers that were left on board somehow managed to keep the ol' girl going.

The ships stabilisers were also shot, so it would be a hard task docking properly as we were slightly tilted to the left, man we were lucky to of survived!

"Wake up champ" a voice said "Yo wake up!"

I stirred from my slumber, it was Kez, now shaking me aswell to wake me up.

"We're about to dock, Captain wants us ready to get off the ship so the repair teams can move on" Kez said.

"Okay i'm up" I groaned not wanting to leave my warm bed. I had to so eventually prised myself off the bed.

I stumbled through to our quarters bathroom on the far side, it was fairly small but more than enough for 2 troopers to use whilst on board. I walked over to the sink and splashed my face with water before looking at my reflection in the mirror above. I looked like death, dark rings around my eyes, and generally scruffy. With that i cupped my hands and drenched my hair, and kept rubbing my face with it aswell. Eventually i looked half awake and not so scruffy and left the bathroom.

Kez was dressed in a fresh set of army combats and shirt but no armour on the top this time, i decided i might aswell change into a fresh set of my black ODST combats and shirts.

After 10 minutes or so we were both decent and ready to go, i was headed for the door before Kez chucked me the leg holster and my Handgun.

"Just in case, don't wanna get caught out with no weapon at all do we?" Kez said.

"Yeah but this is a space station and it will get removed from me at security" I hastily replied, not wanting to get busted without the proper clearance and training.

"Oh contraire my little friend, Captain has given you level 1 clearance whilst we are under his command that means you get to keep your Handgun on you" Kez explained somewhat smugly at knowing more than i did.

"Fair enough, if you're winding me up though i will hurt you" I cheekily replied.

We both left the room, somewhat made more difficult by the ships lean, but it wasn't so bad. Walking down the once bustling corridors of the ship in silence was haunting, bodies still strewn everywhere. We stayed in silence, after all what could we say? We for some reason hadn't died whilst these men lost their lives to that alien scum, i didn't know if we were just lucky or skilled, i'm inclined to go with being lucky!

"This is the Captain, will all personnel please head to Bay 2, a Pelican is waiting" the comms crackled off after the announcement.

We were just around the corner so it didn't take us long, surprisingly the 5 soldiers who had survived with us yesterday were sitting and waiting in the back of the Pelican already. We hopped up and in, getting a few nods from them, all thankful to finally be surrounded by living breathing people.

"Hi diddly hi boys" The Pelicans pilot said over comms "Lets get you boys to the station, think a rest is certainly in order, heard what ya'll did, gotta hand it to ya best bunch of men i've transported"

We took that as a compliment but remained in silence, the Pelican shuddering a little as it left its launch pad. Soon enough we had left the UNSC Gorgon, looking through the windows of the Pelican, we could see just how bad the damage was, it was even worse than we had imagined. Huge chunks of the frigates body were missing where enemy missiles had hit, one of the engines at the rear of the ship also hung a precarious angle spouting sparks and some other stuff.

"Damn, thats going to be a huge job to get that back into working order" Kez said also looking at the ship through the windows.

"Yeah tell me about it, don't think we will be moving anywhere for a while" I replied.

The other soldiers heads dropped a little when i said that, i hadn't meant to upset them, though it was hard not to be down at a time like this.

"Hey fella's, how about you hang around with us whilst we wait for the ol girl to be repaired?" Kez asked them.

We got grunts and noises of decline of the offer, "Ah well suit yourselves, offers open should you want to though" Kez said to them again.

"Landing in 2 minutes gentlemen" the female voice of the Pelicans plot said again over the comms.

I slumped back in my seat, and waited to land, the journey hadn't been the worst in the Pelican but there was a rather horrid miserable atmosphere about it, even Kez the usual cheery man i'd met was looking a tad glum.

We felt the Pelican slow a little and begin to turn as we headed for one of the bays on the huge space station, and when i say huge it really was a thing to of seen, there must be hundreds of floors high, and at least 20 miles long, all built in a circular shape, with a small hole in the middle, sort of looked like a gigantic ring donut.

"Here we are boys, have a good time now" the pilot said, as the Pelican docked. The back door opening on the Pelican allowing us to exit the craft.

No sooner had we got off, had the Pelican set off on another journey

to somewhere.

"Welcome to Space Station Chrystal Clear, please make yourselves comfortable and enjoy your time here" a voice said eerily as we walked to the exit door of the bay we had been dropped in. Definately the space stations AI i thought.

The door in front of us opened, there was no security checks nothing, so we must've been dropped into one of the troop bays. We continued to walk into the lobby before halting figuring out which way certain places were, me and Kez had our minds set on a bar or club, instinctively following signs for a leisure deck.

"Follow me champ" Kez said turning to me, for some reason he had adopted calling me champ and i didn't know why but i wouldn't question it.

I followed him, these places always seemed to confuse me, but i had been told that happened to everyone at first but that i would soon pick it up. We managed to find a lift and jumped in it, as usual Kez pressed the button for the floor we wanted then wildy stabbed at other buttons pretty much lighting half the selection up on the console.

"Do you always have to do that?" i asked him laughing a little.

"Yes, yes i do, damn navy they deserve it" he replied before beaming a smile.

The lift shot up and up wizzing by floors, finally coming to halt, the doors opened and we exited the lift, and made our way out into the wide corridor ahead of us. The place we had got to was huge, there was a wide corridor and various places on either side, no clubs we could see yet, but i saw a sign hanging above "Chrystal Club - This way" with a big arrow pointing forwards. We followed it and sure enough at the far end and round a corner there was the club.

Entering this place, it seemed pretty empty then again it was early for the nightlife onboard yet, we made straight for the bar and plonked ourselves down. A young blonde girl appeared from the far end of the bar and came down to us.

"Sorry guys, we aren't technically open yet" She explained, seeming a tad shy.

"Well could we please just sit over in the far corner out the way and have a couple?" i said putting on my pleading face.

"Well, i guess you could... but i could get in trouble" the young girl replied.

"Ah horse shit, i didn't just battle a shitload of Covenant assholes on my mutherfucking ship to be refused a drink" Kez spat out, patience obviously leaving his mind completely.

"Listen sir, you talk to me like that again and i will get security to remove you! What on earth did i do to you?" she replied angrily staring at him.

"Fine, well i'm off then champ, see you when i do" Kez announced and left.

"Is he always like that?" she asked turning to me, a tad shocked by his reaction.

"Not usually no but he's technically a girl so he's probably just on his monthly cycle" I replied giving the girl a wink. She blushed and went a light shade of red.

"Well if you still want your drink there is something i could use your help with first" the girl replied.

"Go on, what you need?" i asked back.

"Well i've got to change one of the drink containers for these pumps, but i can't lift it on my own, would you mind just giving me a hand?" she asked.

"Sure why not" i said hopping up from the bar stool.

I followed her out back and down a few steps to where the containers were, 7 in total all hooked up, the 8th one wasn't and was empty, she had obviously managed to move the empty one okay.

She pointed across to a big red container which i picked up with relative ease before placing it down where it should go, after id done this she plugged the piping into it and there was a click and wirring sound as she did so.

Heading back to the bar, she began talking a bit more confidently explaining how she had come to be on this station, and such things as missing family back home, i listened to her as she seemed to just want to get everything out. I didn't know if it was the girl just knew i could be trusted or if she really liked me, but either way it was nice to finally have conversation with someone other than Kez.

We sat for hours at the bar in the club, just simply talking, whilst drinking a nice Cider. She seemed so happy for the company and to be honest so was i. Time ticked on and soon enough it was time for the Club to open up for the night, at which point i decided to leave for a little while and see if i could find my sister. She gave me her room number and told me if i felt like another chat or anything to head on over.

Leaving the club my attentions turned to that of finding my sister, christ knows where she would be stationed but maybe someone who works around the station would know.

The feeling of being alone without Kez around was even more noticeable, wandering around this huge station. It is pretty much a floating city in space!

I saw an information console up ahead and decided i'd use that to see if i could locate my sister. I clicked the personnel search button and entered my sisters name, Kelly Hill, the system took a moment but soon flashed up her department, she was stationed on the bridge, more surprisingly she was also a Lieutenant! Why hadn't she told anyone?

With this i decided i'd venture up that way to try and find her.

The lift seemed to take forever to reach the top of the station where the bridge was, i'd managed to blag my way past the 2 guards who stood guard of this lift as it only went to the bridge. As the lift went up, i found myself thinking about the last time i had seen my sister, it must've been about 5 years ago, she went off for her Navy training, and never came back, even when she had leave she was always somewhere else with various friends.

"Welcome to the bridge" that eerie voice said as the lift doors opened, ahead of me there were people milling around as well as others typing and clicking away on their various consoles, i wandered around to see if i could see Kelly, problem was it had been so long i didn't really know what she looked like as of this moment in time.

"Steve? is that you?" a familiar voice said behind me. I turned around to see my sister, in her Lieutenants uniform, decorated with a couple of medals, her blonde hair tied back in a ponytail with a wisp of hair just dangling on her forehead. She had certainly changed since i saw her last, she was actually quite pretty and had lost that childish look she had all them years ago.

"Kelly!" i exclaimed.

"Oh my god i can't believe its you!" she said before diving forwards and giving me a huge hug, it felt good to actually be with someone in my family who cared, "What on earth are you doing here?"

"I was on board the UNSC Gorgon, headed for training" i replied "ODST training"

"What! thats amazing, but how on earth did you get off that ship alive?" She said obviously knowing what had happened.

"I was given a crash course the couple of days before it was attacked by my good friend Kez whos also here with me, he certainly saved my life on that ship" i explained.

"I heard about what you and him did to eliminate those 2 Covenant cruisers, you and him are quite the hero's on this station, i'm so glad you made it through! So where are you going for training?" she asked wanting to know.

"Earth, apparently its the best of the best, bit nervous but i'm sure it will be fine" i said trying to sound as though i wasn't nervous at all.

"Listen i'm kind of working right now but i finish in half an hour, come meet me at one of the balcony bars, we will sit and talk and have a good catch up" She said, but as she did so alarms went up onboard the station.

"Shit, they are earlier than expected!" she exclaimed, "Follow me"

I did as i was told and we both ran into the main platform of the bridge, the Stations leader was an Admiral, though i couldn't make out the name on his badge. We looked out of the bridges main window and saw a fleet of Covenant ships just off in the distance. A few

people were running around like headless chickens freaking out, but they soon got a slap from other members of the bridge.

"Raise the alarm level to level 1" the Admiral ordered, and soon the alarms were ringing out.

"Lieutenant Hill, who is this?" The Admiral questioned slightly puzzled.

"This is my brother Steve Hill, he was one of the two men who destroyed the cruisers earlier and was onboard UNSC Gorgon, Sir" Kelly explained.

"Ah very well, i'm glad to of met you Mr Hill, Staff Sergeant Kezlowski will be here soon" As he said that, out of the lift Kez walked in, all suited in his armour and loaded, he brought with him two cases and chucked them at me.

"Brought your stuff mate, get it on we might be needing to get our hands dirty again" He smiled, then noticed the young blonde next to me "and who's this?"

"This would be my sister Kelly, Kez meet Kelly, Kelly meet Kez" i said introducing them.

I began putting on my armour over the undersuit i was already wearing, a few explosions hit the space station, but only caused minor damage, outside now there were 18 UNSC ships headed to intercept the Covenant fleet, a full fleet of 25 ships. 3 UNSC ships remained docked, one of them being the UNSC Gorgon although it was declared unfit for services and now it was unlikely to get repaired based on what was happening around us.

All suited and booted i got a thumbs up and a look from Kelly, she seemed to approve of me all clad with my SMG slung across me. Kez being him was checking her out, made me chuckle because unlike him i'd noticed the ring on her hand, she had obviously got someone fairly important in her life right now.

"You two, you are to stand guard here on the bridge" The Admiral ordered.

With this we took up positions either side of the Admirals chair. Outside the station a fierce battle raged between the big purple Covenant ships and our UNSC ships, a few of ours had already been destroyed, meanwhile it was announced the UNSC Gorgon had slipspace capabilities again and was now being filled with evacuee's, the planet below was already being evacuated with other ships, but here the 3 ships still docked were now being used to get all important and non important staff away and to a safer zone.

A few smaller pod shaped things were zooming towards the station, they looked familiar, then a man shouted from the console to the right "Enemy boarding craft in bound" shortly after there were a few booms as the craft hit, one hit just off to the right of the bridge, immediatly we could hear gun chatter on the other side of the door on the bridge.

Me and Kez hopped to it, we disabled the lift then proceeded to set up defensive positions around the door knowing that it would only be



a matter of time before they tried to break through and wipe us out on the bridge. I sure as hell was not gonna let some alien scum break in here and kill the only member of my family i could actually be happy around, i glanced to my left and noticed my sister going about her work, she had really matured into someone quite special, she was sending out commands for all troops on board the station to assemble defenses to hold off the enemy forces whilst the station was evacuated.

The door in front of us was forced open a little, we could see an Elite forcing it open with his bare hands, if you call them that? He saw us and quickly dived back before we could get any shots off, but in the next breath a plasma grenade was tossed through the gap he had forced, i landed on one of the naval engineers on the bridge who screamed in panic. Kez lept across ripping the guys shirt off in one swift motion whilst tossing it back through the hole, it exploded less than a second after being forced back through. The scream of a dieing Elite could be heard.

"That'll teach the ugly bastard" Kez said coming back over to our defensive position.

A Grunt popped its head up and i quickly sent lead into its skull killing it instantly, there were more and more Covenant emerging at the door but we knew there was no lift or anything on the otherside and that this was just the squad off of that boarding pod.

We got 2 other soldiers, whom were also guarding the bridge to go and open the door and we would charge the remaining enemy soldiers. The door flew open and we sent grenades and lead flying into the small room, within a matter of seconds the enemy team were down and we were good to return to the bridge.

"4 K.I.A's Sir" Kez informed the Admiral of the dead team that had originally been in the room when the pod hit.

Outside the UNSC ships were now fighting a losing battle, they had whittled the Covenant down to 14 ships from the 25 but now only 6 UNSC ships remained, it was pretty much now a case of last stand and hope they held off the Covenant long enough for us to evac. We however would be the last to leave the ship with the Admiral and other high ranking officers on the bridge, including my sister.

"Get the Spartans off the ship now!" Ordered the Admiral.

Spartans? i'd heard a rumour of some form of super soldier could this possibly be them? i had no idea what these Spartan things were but they were obviously important as 2 teams of men were dispatched to make sure they were on one of the fleeing ships.

There was a huge flash of purple outside, one of the Covenant ships exploded taking out a few others around it, but now we were down to our last 3 ships to their 9.

"Station is clear Admiral, we are the last to go" a young Ensign said, i noticed it was Ensign Brogan from the base i had left from, what on earth was she doing here?

"Roger that, right everyone get ready to leave, Ensign activate the self destruct sequence, Hill take this chip, your suits helmet is the

only one that can carry and use this" He instructed placing it into a little slot on my helmet.

He had placed the stations A.I. into my suit, obviously we had to protect it as it had all the important information on it. My helmet HUD flickered a little and soon enough i was greeted by the A.I. its name incidently being Chrystal.

We formed up and all of us got in the now re-activated lift, me, Kez and the two other soldiers lined up at the front, we would exit the lift first and make sure the lobby was clear before advancing on to eventually board our ship, we would all be headed for the battered UNSC Gorgon.

The lift stopped and we exited it, spreading out, the lobby was eerily clear and absolutly void of sound. Everyone else soon filed out the lift, and we began moving at a slow pace down the corridors, we were on edge and not taking any risks, we wanted to live and make sure we gave them Covenant assholes some payback.

Suddenly in front of us a wall blew out and a group of Covenant Grunts came ambling through supported by 2 Elites.

"Take cover!" Yelled Kez "Grenade out"

He lobbed a grenade down the corridor, it fell short but the shrapnel took out 2 Grunts, enraged the Elites sent the other Grunts forwards, Plasma flying everywhere, we began firing not willing to fall back, we would stand this ground and kill them all!

7 Grunts charging actually posed a fair threat, especially as they were urged on by the Elites. There was yell to my right, one of the 2 other soldiers that had been with us was shot, before i could get to him another plasma round hit him in the face, it was a grim sight, i saw my sister look in horror at what she had seen.

"Mutherfuckers!" i yelled and sent a spray of lead across the Grunts, i took out 3, 4 were left now, but they were soon whittled down. It dawned on me though we had taken our concentration off the Elites, and they were already on top of us.

Kez was involved in a gun fight with one of them, both firing at each other from behind columns on either side of the corridor, the other i realised was right behind me, but he wasn't after me he headed for the other soldier as he had shot at it. He picked the guy up by the throat and by the time i'd pulled the trigger he had ripped the mans head off and tossed it aside. My shots hit it though, but he turned to go after the personnel from the bridge, including my sister. I went to shoot again and realised i was out of ammo, i had no spare clips, i pulled my handgun out and fired the only clip i had for it, it only served to make the beast even more angry.

Sure enough i was clean out of ammo, i only had one option, hand to hand with my Combat Knife!

I sprinted across drawing my blade, the damn thing moved faster than me however and smashed a few Ensigns to the ground stomping on them for good measure, my sister and Admiral had also been sent flying and were down on the ground next to each other, the ugly scum was headed for them.

He lifted his hoof like foot to stomp down upon my sister, the look of fear and horror on her face as she lifted an arm to shield herself was a look i hadn't seen before, at this time i managed to dive through the air and push the great hulking beast over. It was a close call, too close for my liking but now i was involved in hand to hand fight with a huge creature that towered over me and possessed alot more strength than me.

There was an almighty battle cry from the beast as it jumped back up, i stood up just in time to move out of its stomp that would of undoubtedly crushed my skull to mush. It kept flailing at me, i managed to avoid the majority of its swings but the final one i didn't and was sent in the wall behind me, slightly winded, i managed to shift to my left as the beasts hand smashed a huge chunk out of the wall where i was just a few seconds ago, instinctively i slashed down with my knife and sliced one of the beasts gigantic fingers off.

It cried out in pain, and turned menacingly to me.

"Pittiful human, i shall wipe you from this universe with pleasure!" the ugly beast roared at me.

Holy shit, they can speak english! i thought to myself, the Elite jumped at me, as he did so he clasped both hands together and swung down, he just missed me but managed to shoulder barge me away again. I slashed with the knife and gashed the beast across the chest, it roared again, just getting angrier and angrier.

Kez meanwhile was slowly winning his battle, the Elite over there had used all the charge in his Plasma Rifle and was trying to get across to Kez, but was failing as everytime it tried it was showered in lead, unlike me Kez had gotten a load of spare ammo.

The beast lunged forwards again at me, this time i rammed my blade into its chest, but before i could pull it out it flung me away. It seemed unharmed by the blade being deep in its chest and even pulled it out in front of me.

"Useless feable weapons" It said almost laughing.

It began to walk over to me slowly, me still on my back from being flung away.

"Here son!" i heard the Admiral yell, as he threw me his sidearm.

I grabbed it and in the blink of an eye before the Elite could recharge its shields i turned and pointed and pulled the trigger, the single shot ripped through its head turning everything inside to mush before flying out the back of its alien skull. It let out a last breath and collapsed right in front of me.

I looked across to Kez to now see him walking over to a very wounded Elite, he calmly knelt down next to it and slid his combat knives blade through the Elites throat partially severing its head. He wiped the blade on the beast itself before resheathing it.

It was just me and Kez now escorting the remaining bridge staff to the UNSC Gorgon. As if things couldn't get harder.

We regrouped, i picked up some ammo off the dead troopers and reloaded, giving the Admiral back his handgun, my sister grabbed me for a hug. We had to move the more we waited the less chance we had of escaping the Covenant.

We ran now, no more slow walking from here on out. Kez assumed the lead, he knew where he was headed, i followed just behind him. We thudded down corridors, and the signs for the docking bay where the UNSC Gorgon started to show. We turned the corner and found a group of Rangers fanned out around the entrance to the bay making sure it was clear so we could get on board.

We ran through the rangers and got everyone on board, the Rangers were shortly behind us. We had made it and as soon as the hatch closed we were already joining the other 2 ships and entering slip space, the Gorgon shuddered and groaned but the ship held out and settled as we zoomed on, another fleet of UNSC ships had arrived just as we left sending troops to the planet to try and protect it, the planets fate im sure we would find out soon enough.

Onboard people were crying, some sitting staring into blank space, others tried to talk about anything other than what had just happened. I wasn't sure would happen now, i hadn't even had a single day of training and yet here i was in the thick of it with a mad man named Kez and my sister, in a way it sounds like a bad comedy but the harsh reality was that i was having to learn the job on the actual job.

The Admiral gave me his thanks but he soon darted off as he was called to the bridge, thankfully the ship had been cleared of all the dead bodies that had been on board previously, my sister looked worn and tired so i decided i'd show her to mine and Kez's quarters and let her have some rest, in honesty i need sleep badly.

At the quarters i let her take my bed, and i took the sofa we had in our quarters, Kez had already get here and was sound asleep by the time we arrived, i decided first that i would shower before getting some kip.

As far as your first week in a job goes this certainly was fast paced and constantly busy, but i'd survived so far so heck i couldn't be doing to badly. I showered and got changed and grabbed a spare pillow and blanket and got comfy on the sofa, pretty much as soon as my head hit the pillow i was out cold, and fast asleep.

#### 4. Chapter 4: Something out of the Blue

**\*\*Chapter 4: Something out of the blue\*\***

Since the well earned sleep after getting back on board the UNSC Gorgon, all non essential personnel had been ordered to be put into Cryo, to conserve the rather limited rations that were on board until we reached our next destination.

The destination in question was going to be a small colony far away from Earth where i was originally destined to be, but because we now had to try and prevent the Covenant from finding the home land Earth, we had to keep bouncing from colony to colony. I was in no doubt that

at the rate things were going we would soon be at Earth making a last stand but hopefully that wouldn't be for a few years yet.

Cryo for all intents and purposes is brilliant but as i was finding out, when you are awoken from it, you really don't feel like you have slept at all. I'd been in and out of Cryo 3 times in the last 4 weeks, as i was needed for various things, including at last some training. There had been a squad of ODST's board the Gorgon from the space station, and had been ordered to train me up with all their knowledge, it was evident i wasn't going to get to an actual training base, so it had been decided that the paper work would be filled in and that i would achieve my grades here.

Most of the training had been done in the firing range, which was now manned by a 3 man team, 2 guards and 1 guy who sanctioned the use of weapons, luckily for me all 3 of them were as laid back as the old guy who used to be there. Anyway, i'd come on leaps and bounds and was now equal if not outdoing a few members of the ODST squad, the Sergeant of the ODST's had trained me well, even he had admitted that i would probably exceed the levels he could teach.

Being in Cryo again right now, nothing really mattered, i'd changed the atmospherics of my Cryo-pod courtesy of the A.I. i'd helped transport from the station, though she was now back in my damn helmet again, thankfully she didn't seem like the usual A.I. and actually aided me an awful lot by scanning the area for enemies and such things, plus we would also chat as if we were friends, though i had looked a complete fool when i'd not changed to private comm and the others heard me talking to myself even though i wasn't.

Still i'd learnt alot from her, including some rather classified information, she had confirmed what Spartans were and also, she had shown me images and such on the HUD of my helmet, i was in awe of them. If anything would save us from extinction these things would certainly put up the biggest fight and surprise those scummy aliens.

I was jolted from my Cryo slumber, rather unexpectedly, my eyes were blurry and my hearing muffled a bit, i could make out someone talking to me but as of yet i hadn't been able to wake myself up enough to understand a word they had said.

I was splashed with a face full of water, and that was it i was up.

"Come on dude get the heck up, jesus anyone with erectile dysfunction gets up quicker than you!" It was Kez.

"Oi you cheeky sod, i was quite happily sleeping there, and that is the worst comparison i have ever heard" i hastily replied.

"Yeah well, Captain wants us on the bridge as and when you are ready, so get dressed, i don't think he will appreciate seeing your trouser snake roaming freely" Kez said making me realise i was indeed naked.

"Well that may be so but why the heck were you looking? Coming out the closet are we?" i joked.

"Fuck off!" He said whilst laughing and turning around "i'll meet you

outside, hurry up though"

I jumped out of my pod, and went round to the cupboard to the right of it, inside was my black combat undersuit, all clean and ironed nicely. I couldn't help but love walking around in this, i'd be lying if i said i hated the attention it brought me, especially from the ladies on board.

All dressed and suited i stretched a little and clicked my neck, that felt amazingly good, i then re attached the holster to my leg and clipped my handgun into it, i'd now got weapons clearance so didn't have to worry anymore. I then turned and headed towards the door out of the Cryo bay.

Kez was leaning against the wall opposite the door, looking bored as ever, one thing i also noticed was the ship must've been being repaired because it was looking alot better on the inside every time i was awoken.

"Come on then sleeping beauty, to the bridge we go" Kez said in a cheesy soft tone.

I followed him without replying to his comment, i was still waking up i guess, Cryo really did take it out of you for some reason. We continued down the long corridor, headed for a lift that would take us up to the main lobby where we had made a last stand when we were last on board the ship.

In his usual fashion, Kez hit our floors button then proceeded to press a load of others, i'm pretty sure by now someone must of cottoned on to him doing this at least i thought the A.I. would of stopped this by now. Regardless it always left a grin on his face knowing he was about to fuck up someones day with his antics.

The lift reached the lobby and we stepped on out, and headed round to the bridge, everything had been repaired up here, it looked as though nothing had happened, although from the outlay of the ship on the consoles there were still large chunks of the ship missing.

"Ah gentleman, thanks for coming" The Captain said as we walked into the bridge.

He finished talking to one of the pilots at the front console, and then came over to us, we Saluted before signalled for us to be at ease.

"Now, we have had news through, im afraid not good news at that, but i have to inform you, the Covenant fleet have entered the system with Jericho VII in it, luckily the UNSC command had prepared for this and there is a fleet of UNSC ships there defending it, but unfortunately the Covenant have managed to land on the Jericho and well all hell has broken loose." The Captain explained, as he did so i felt myself drain of any colour, all i could think about was my family back there.

"Sir, is, is my family okay?" i eventually managed to get out.

"We don't know, im sorry to say, evacuation isn't the simplest of tasks and right now all thats happened is civilians have been chucked on evac ships in no specific order, but i will notify you as soon as

we know you have my word." The Captain replied.

"On another note, i have to inform you that you have now passed and completed your training, UNSC Command has pushed through all the paper work and you are now officially an ODST, and in light of the previous enemy encounters, you are being given the rank of Sergeant." He said with praise.

"Sir, Thank you!" i replied, delighted at this bit of news.

"Thats not all, Staff Sergeant Kezlowski here has also been through his ODST training and will join you, however we won't be assigning you to another ODST unit, you will perform as a 2 man infiltration and scout team as and when we need you, unfortunately this means we will probably lose you off of the UNSC Gorgon, but we haven't had the details through yet, for now enjoy yourselves we won't be in the next system for another 48 hours" The Captain said saluting us and heading back to the pilots.

We headed back out of the bridge, heading for the mess hall, i was starving to say the least, and was just begging for some food.

"How come you didn't tell me you were becoming an ODST?" i questioned Kez.

"Well i wanted to surprise you" He chuckled.

"Yeah yeah thats right because you just want to impress me and try and get in my pants" i joked.

"For the last time i'm not gay!" he exclaimed.

"Never said you were but i haven't seen you hook up with any girls yet" i teased him.

"I'm not great with that stuff, not for lack of trying though" he replied.

"Well you better try harder then hadn't you?" i said, smiling cheekily.

He just shot me a look, and then laughed. We were about to get in the lift when some Naval engineer came out in a huff.

"Whats up fella?" i asked as he walked past us as we stepped in.

"Some frickin jerk, sent me up and down the god damn ship, i have serious intel here for the Captain and if i find who did that to me i will bloody well murder them!" the young guy exclaimed.

"Hey, i know who it was..." Kez retorted.

"who?" the guy asked.

"Me!" Kez exclaimed as the lift doors closed just in time to stop the guy getting back at Kez.

I was roaring with laughter next to him and he too soon burst out laughing, it wasn't really funny, not if you are the person that gets

the tour courtesy of Kez, but for us it was.

The lift reached main lobby below, and we stepped out, this time i quickly hit all the buttons as we stepped out, making Kez laugh and then high five me. We began walking again towards the Mess Hall, it wasn't far but being so hungry every step seemed like it was to far. Finally we made it there, and surprisingly the place had barely anyone in there, i figured this was due to alot of people being in Cryo.

I went to the serving desk absolutly starving, luckily Chef Chuck was behind it and he always allowed me double rations.

"Hit me up with a double again Chuck" i said to him.

"Sure thing man!" he replied and slapped double everything onto my plate almost letting it spill over the sides.

"Thanks buddy" i said as i took the plate from him and headed to the tables, i noticed my sister was sitting at the far table next to the windows with some guy, i decided i'd leave them be rather than join them and sat down a few seats away.

Kez soon joined me, and we both tucked into our meals, needless to say it tasted like heaven, even though ship food was not something to be admired, but when you have been without for a while or what seemed a while then well anything tasted like heaven.

I had just cleaned my plate of food, when Kez decided to say something to me.

"Hey whats the story then with your sis and that fella over there?" he asked giving a slight nod in the direction of them.

"You know, i'm not entirely sure mate, could be the guy she is with or it could be just a friend, i really don't know" i replied not really phased.

"Ah okay, just curious" Kez said before finishing his meal.

"Kez you ain't hitting on my sister are you?" i asked.

"Well, no, but that said no offence to you bro but she is kinda hot" he replied, looking a tad nervous of saying what he had.

"Each to their own, bare in mind, i will kill you if you hurt her, and besides i don't even know if the guy shes with is even still alive." i replied warning him.

"Don't worry man i wouldn't do anything unless i knew she was single and into me" He said reassuring me.

I gave him a weird look and stood up, and dropped my plate on the pile of other dirty ones, and headed on out. Kez remained and went over to the tv and sofas in one of the corners and sat down and watched the latest news. I was headed for the firing range, so i decided i would head back to our room and grab my armour and guns.

One thing i loved was the new weapons i had been given, i'd received



a brand spanking new Silenced SMG with a more powerful shot and enhanced range, it also featured an adjustable stock and less recoil. It was amazing what the UNSC techs could do! I'd also been supplied with a Battle Rifle aswell with enhancements on it to, and i'd been provided with a 50cal Sniper Rifle, also featuring a few enhancements. My hand gun was a new version of the Desert Eagle variety but featured a full 18 bullet clip, reduced recoil and enhanced sights. No Covenant bastard would be fucking with me anytime soon i thought to myself.

I had also been given the new spec ODST Armour, it was beautiful and much more robust, also lighter aswell, i really didn't know how they had managed to make it stronger aswell as lighter, i'd had a white stripe painted down the middle of the Black helmet and had a few white highlights on the rest of the black armour, it looked mighty good. The Environment system had also been enhanced, and my helmet allowed for better vision with an enhanced night time view HUD.

I had however been told i was the only soldier able to carry an A.I. in my helmet, well apart from the Spartans that i had been informed of courtesy of Chrystal the A.I. in my helmet.

I was all suited, and headed on down to the firing range, nothing like shooting Covenant targets to unleash a bit of pent up anger, it'd also help take my mind off of what was happening back home on Jericho, although me and my father didn't get along i didn't wish anything like that upon him. My mother thankfully was on Earth so she was definatly safe for the time being.

I got into the lift which led down to the firing range in the bottom of the ship, it was there in a flash, as i got out i put my helmet on and the systems environment system pressurized and adapted to the surroundings, my HUD also came online and soon enough Chrystal was also awake.

I swiped my personnel card and the new thicker door to the armoury and firing range opened.

It was deserted, i looked around and wondered where on earth the armoury staff were, seemed like it must've been a quiet day and they had bumped off early. I helped myself to a load of ammo in some crates and pushed a button and let myself into the firing range, as usual i made my way to the far range, so i could utilise my sniper rifle aswell.

Sure enough the range was definatly empty so it was just me all on my own. I set the ammo down on the desk thing, and also plonked my guns down aswell, it looked amazing a stack load of ammo and then all my weapons laid down next to them.

I spent hours just firing and firing destroying targets with ease, i could now hit a grunt target with the sniper rifle from the furthest distance straight inbetween the eyes, i had finally become something of a very highly skilled marksman, i had Kez and the ODST Sergeant to thank for that. I continued rattling off bullets, Chrystal praising me and oooing and ahhhing at various shots, she seemed to be enjoying herself, i definatly was. We took a break and i perched on a seat that was down there.

We chatted for ages, i told her about the stuff that was happening on

Jericho, she seemed sympathetic even though she was an A.I. but it was much appreciated. She said she would keep tabs on the system and see if she could locate my father at all as and when she could get access to such parts of the system, she wasn't fully synched with the systems here on the Gorgon, mainly because the ship had its own A.I. built into it.

After the little break i collected a load more ammo clips and then began rattling off rounds yet again. I decided to experiment with the new explosive ammo, against the stronger targets and i must say they packed a hell of a punch, they destroyed the metal targets with ease, so i looked forward to using these on the battle field if circumstances permitted of course.

Whilst i fired away with various guns and different ammo types a group of rangers had come in and set up shop a few sections down, i ignored them mostly and just rattled away, hitting each and every target with supreme accuracy. I could tell they were watching me, and that they were slightly in awe at what i was doing, i decided i'd show off and set up a target at the furthest distance and instead of the sniper rifle i'd shoot it with the Battle Rifle. Aiming down range i wasn't sure if it would reach so to compensate i aimed higher allowing for bullet drop, i shot and destroyed its head with an explosive round. There were some claps and few exclamations as if to say is this guy for real.

In fairness they weren't bad shots themselves, they were easily rattling away through targets themselves though not as accurate as me, but still any hit is a hit as long as it seriously maimed its target or killed it.

I took another breather and got a drink from the vending machine behind me, good old fashioned Coca Cola, a drink that had lasted since god knows when! and it tasted mighty good to. I sat down again in my firing section out of sight of the rangers and chatted to Chrystal again, she seemed a little pre-occupied though so i soon started shooting again.

I remained there for another 3 hours and saw on the tally next to me that i had rattled through 782 targets with a hit ratio of 99%, chuffed with this i decided that would be it and i returned to my quarters.

I returned to hear some noises i really didn't want to, seemed Kez had worked his magic on some lass at last, thank god i thought it might calm him down a little. I managed to sneak in without actually seeing anything and place my weapons down in the small room where we now kept our weapons, unfortunately i dropped an ammo clip and it made a loud clonk on the metal floor, i heard them notice in the room next door and quickly turned on the lights.

I emerged and what i saw was well something i hadn't thought i would see. It wasn't just any girl but it was my sister Kelly with him both with the covers up to their necks.

"Steve! I'm sorry!" She said thinking i was gonna go on a rage.

"Seriously, its okay, but i thought you were bloody well engaged or married?" i questioned.

"I was, a while ago i just hadn't got rid of the ring, he has been dead for over a year, he was killed in one of the first Covenant attacks" she said, trying to not make Kez feel like crap.

"Listen, Kez i already told you what i think, so you better as hell make sure you look after her, anyway i will leave you guys to it, think i don't want to be around for this" i chuckled and headed out.

I was slightly in shock as to what i had seen back there but i shrugged it off it was up to them what they wanted to do, as long as she didn't get hurt in the process.

I decided i'd go check out the observation deck and see what was happening in the various colonies, i knew Jericho was under attack but i wanted to see the situation elsewhere.

I soon arrived there, i was still suited in my armour so i could chat to Chrystal, i think she appreciated the company and me getting her out and about, if she was human we may well of been a couple by now, but thats just how things go.

I was again the only person there, so i had the freedom of the main console, i flagged up all known conflicts as of the current time, and i was surprised, 3 different colonies were waging a battle, a losing battle at that, the system with Jericho in was the strongest one of the 3 thank god, so there was some hope. I noticed a system blacked out on the system and decided to bring it up. The place in question was a place called Harvest, it been completely wiped out, classed as glassed, basically what the Covenant do is use some particle beam and literally wipe any living thing out below on the planet.

It was pretty grim some of the details so i left it be, there was way to many similarities between what had happened there to what was going on in 3 different places right now.

"Chrystal, do you reckon we can win this war?" i asked.

"It all depends on how well the UNSC troops are prepared" She replied.

"No seriously what are the odds?" i asked again.

"The odds are highly in favour of the Covenant forces at the moment, but that could change with what ONI have going on, but what it is i can't access" she said.

"Well i hope they get their arses in gear, theres only so much we can do" i said whilst walking out of the observation deck.

i had about 24 hours now until we reached the system we were headed for, apparently it was the Ambassador System, though it was relatively minor, only 2 planets or rather small moons occuipied here. Still hopefully the Covenant forces hadn't located it yet.

"Sergeant Hill, please report to the bridge, Thank you" some Navy person spoke out over the ships comms.

What could they want now? i thought, it certainly wasn't that we were under attack, so god knows, could be my first assignment or that i was being transferred to another ship. Guess i would find out soon enough.

I reached the bridge and the Captain was comfortable in his chair sipping a hot mug of Coffee.

"Sir" i said saluting him as i did so.

"At ease Sergeant, i've got your first assignment, it would seem you will be remaining with us until we reach Earth whenever that is" he said "Now, we have had some trouble with various UNSC military objects going missing in the system we are approaching, a defected bunch of civilians who for some reason are worshipping the Covenant forces, sort of like a cult. Its came to our attention they have aquired some valuable UNSC material on various systems they have stolen aswell as a few vehichles, we need you to go in with Staff Sergeant Kezowski and Lieutenant Hill"

"Why my sister if you don't mind me asking sir?" i asked.

"Because shes the only one who knows to work some of the equipment, we need it wiped and we need it destroyed. There is one piece of material so to speak that we need retrieving, mainly for its data, its a Pelican, that has served for us before it has in its systems recordings and archives of pretty much everything, these can't be wiped or destroyed without being plugged into the UNSC mainframe unfortunatly you can't do this locally and will need to get the Pelican back here onboard. You cannot fail this do you understand?" the Captain demanded.

"Yes Sir!" i said loud and clear.

"Excellent, you are in charge for this operation Sergeant, you are in a very priviledged position right now, so saddle up we are ahead of schedule and will be there within the hour, time is of the essence" The Captain said.

We saluted each other and i headed back to the quarters, i just hoped they had both got it out of their systems and were finished.

I reached them in no time, and thankfully they were both dressed sat on the sofa drinking some tea.

"Right guys... hang on is that my Tea i brought with me?... nevermind, we have an assignment!" i said rather more proudly than i should of.

"Oh shall i leave you to it?" Kelly asked.

"No no, you are in on this one to, we have to locate, wipe and destroy various UNSC material that these Covenant cult worshippers have stolen, and then rescue a Pelican which for some reason can't be wiped unless its on board. Apparently you, Kelly, are the only one who knows how to do all the stuff to the stuff we have to destroy." i explained.

"Excellent, this sounds like just the stuff we were trained for, lets get suited up" Kez said excited.

"Yes lets, well i am already, but anyway don't wet your pants in anticipation, the shit could hit the fan yet, as it usually does" i said "Kelly there is some armour being brought down for you to, and you are being provided with an assault rifle, but we don't expect you to get involved in the gun fights its purely for self defence if it comes to it."

"Okay, thats fine by me, i'm not trained to much for combat" she said.

The armour arrived and so did her weapons and soon enough we were all suited up and ready to go. We headed down to Bay 1, where we had planted the bomb on the Covenant transport ship, and boarded the waiting Pelican drop ship.

All we had to do now was wait until we were in orbit and we would be on our way to our first official assignment, nerves were high, but we felt quietly confident as this didn't involve Covenant.

"Pelican Zulu, you are a go" the Captains voice said over the comms, and sure enough we headed out of Bay 1 towards the larger inhabited moon, weather was hot, so i had prepared my climate suit for it, or rather Chrystal had. Now we had just a short trip to the small city of Ohio Independance, and it would begin...

## 5. Chapter 5: Search&Destroy and a New Toy

**\*\*Chapter 5: Search and Destroy and a New Toy\*\***

Our Pelican was fast entering the atmosphere, every minute was another minute we could use to spring surprise on the enemy ahead of us. Intel was that all the things we were to do were located in a huge warehouse next to some old shopping center, rumour had it no one dared try and stop what was going on for fear of being tortured and killed.

"ETA 4 minutes" the pilot shouted through.

"Right, heres the plan, we will be landing 2 clicks to the west of the target, Kez when we reach the target if you flank round to the rear entrance, i'll head to a building opposite the front and will snipe any bogeys out front, this will allow you to advance and sneak in the side entrance. Kelly you come with me and guard my back i don't want to get taken by surprise whilst sniping." I instructed them both.

"Roger that" Kez said whilst smacking in a mag, and screwing on the silencer to his Battle Rifle, he too had the same model as me now.

Kelly simply nodded, as the Pelican began its descent.

The light in the rear went from red to green and the rear ramp dropped open, we jumped out whilst the Pelican moved slowly along the ground, he had dropped us in a deserted town square.

"Good luck soldiers, see you later!" the pilot said as he flew off back to the UNSC Gorgon.

We spread out, checking the area, there was no movement, we filed up in a line and began to weave our way out of the square and towards the objective, moving along staying close to the shops and buildings.

This place wasn't so built up there were a few sky scrapers but they were in the distance and we wouldn't be going near them, we would be in the rather low built buildings in more of an industrial estate, normal street type place.

We made good progress, the streets strangely quiet for a place not invaded by Covenant. It didn't matter to us as it allowed us the freedom of moving quickly and not being set upon, we still had the element of surprise as they hadn't had a scan of the system to notice the Gorgon in orbit.

"500 meters to target building" i instructed.

This was where us and Kez would separate, he headed off down the street to our left and we entered an abandoned shop and headed for the roof. It was dark inside, letters and junk strewn across the floor, it had been empty for some time that much was evident. I prised open the blocked door to the stairs to the roof, Kelly closing it behind us.

"In position. Over" Kez spoke on the comms. Damn he moved fast.

"Roger that, taking up position" i said as i exited the door on the roof keeping low and advancing to the edge of the roof, luckily i had some ventilation system as cover in front and behind. Kelly closed that door aswell before finding another ventilation cluster to cover my back just in case.

I swung my sniper rifle round and aligned the scope.

"Chrystal, use the motion scanners and try and locate some targets" i spoke to her.

"Already on it" She replied efficiently.

Whilst she did this i scanned the area zooming in, there were two definite bogeys standing guard at the main warehouse entrance. I noted them and scanned the rest of the area, there were three standing guard down at the side entrance where i wanted to get Kez in, and there were also 2 on the roof of the warehouse, standing either side of a rather large hatch which i assumed allowed for airbourne craft to land inside the warehouse.

"2 bogeys out front, 3 at the side entrance and 2 on the roof" i instructed Kez.

"Roger, any info on targets inside?" he asked.

"Not yet, Chrystal is working on that though" i replied.

I decided i would go for the 2 up on the roof first and then the 2 out front. I zoomed in and took into account the wind and distance, there wasnt any wind at all, it was eerily still, it helped though. I

placed my crosshairs on the one on the far left, one swift pull of the trigger and a 50 cal round went sailing towards the guys head, sending it exploding into tiny fragments, i quickly switched to the one on the right and placed a round straight through between his eyes, the back of his head sent flying as the bullet exited the otherside.

"Roof clear" i instructed.

"Roger that" Kez replied.

Luckily for me, the distance between me and the warehouse prevented them hearing the sniper rifles boom as it fired. I scanned down to the front of the warehouse, take aim at the one on the left, another swift pull of the trigger sent him to meet his 2 friends i'd just blown to hell before the other guy could react i'd blown his head apart aswell.

"Front clear" i instructed again.

"Roger that, keep it up" Kez replied.

I changed my angle and looked down the side entrance, all 3 guards were standing in a line, i decided to move to the corner of the building i was on, this would be exhibition stuff. I re-focused and looked again, i had a clean shot straight through all their heads, i could see Kez crouched further down the alley behind a destroyed Warthog just biding his time, he had eyes on the targets just in case.

I lined up my shot, flexing my neck before i did, i gently carressed the trigger, and smiled as i squeezed. The bullet whistled through the air, the vapor trail behind it leaving a satisfying path towards the targets. It hit. It blew all 3 guards heads apart before nestling in the ground beyond them.

"Fucking show off!" Kez spat out over the comms.

"You love it really" i replied.

"To fucking right i do!" he exclaimed "i'll hold position until you form up with me"

"Roger that, coming to you" i replied and swung my sniper rifle back to my back after one last scan of the area. Instead i now carried my improved SMG.

Kelly and i headed back down the stairs and out the shop, not bothering to close doors now. We made really good progress and within 5 minutes we were just across from Kez, i covered Kelly as she moved across the street and down the alley to where the side door was, Kez sitting outside it. I then moved across, dragging the two guards that i downed out the front behind some bins, i then formed up with Kez and Kelly.

"6 enemies inside, 3 sitting outside the package, and 3 at the UNSC consoles" Chrystal replied over our team comms.

"Okay, Kez you take the right flank, i'll go left, Kelly find cover and we will let you know when its all clear" i said as we stacked up

on the door.

"On my mark, 3, 2, 1, NOW" i exclaimed as we burst through the side door. We sent 2 flash bangs either way, blinding and startling the enemy even more. We quickly took the 3 out near the pelican they hadn't even had a chance to move from their chairs, Kez got 2 out of the 3 over at the consoles and i knifed the other as he staggered towards me.

"Clear!" i shouted.

"Clear!" Kez shouted.

"Okay Kelly do your stuff, they must know we are here by now, 10 minutes and we need to be gone!" i ordered, getting Chrystal to utilise the planets satellites to keep an eye on movement around us.

Kelly ran up out of cover and started wiping the consoles, Kez placing explosives on the ones she had done. She certainly knew what she was doing, she furiously tapped into the consoles.

"Enemy forces 4 minutes away" Chrystal chimed in with urgency.

"Guys we got company, ETA 4 minutes, move it, Kez give Kelly the explosives, gonna need to cover her i think" i ordered whilst jumping in a stolen UNSC Warthog and jamming it across the side entrance.

Luckily for us the rear entrance had long been covered over and not used, so it left us with just the main entrance to cover.

"ETA 2 minutes" Chrystal informed me again.

"ETA 2 minutes guys" i shouted.

"Almost done, just the Vehichles need explosives on now!" Kelly shouted.

She hurridly started doing so, man she was actually alot better than i thought she would be under pressure, that had always been a weakness obviously not anymore though.

"Done, lets move" Kelly shouted hopping into the Pelican we had to take.

As she did so the warehouse entrance opened in advance for the incoming enemy.

"Guys, small question, can any of you fly a pelican?" Kelly shouted from the console seat behind the pilots seat.

"You are fucking me! No we can't!" Kez exclaimed as he hopped in the back of the Pelican.

"Fuck it no, too late now, Kelly get on the consoles get the guns working, Kez man the gun, looks like another fucking crash course!" i said jumping in and running up to the cockpit.

I hopped into the pilots seat, staring at the various controls, there



was a steering mechanism in front of me, all i had to do was figure out how to bloody get the thing up in the air and fly it. Chrystal thankfully showed me the engine switch on my hud, i flicked it on and the beast powered up, i noticed a sticker just above that with the name of the craft on it "Lucky Bastard" heh well it better bloody live up to its name!

"Enemies at the entrance!" Kelly exclaimed "you have control of the front gun"

I noticed the trigger like button on the back of the steering controls, and instantly pressed in on it, it sent huge rounds flying and destroyed the 2 front Warthogs painted up in some kind of Cult colours or something.

"Time to get the fuck out of here!" i exclaimed pressing the pedals on the floor the ship began to move forwards and i steered with the control in front of me. I pressed again on the trigger sending the enemy assholes into cover and destroying a tank of fuel for the Warthogs in the process sending about 5 of them burning through the air.

"There you go guys, have some fire works!" i shouted.

We shot forwards out of the warehouse main entrance, as soon as we were half out i yanked back on the steering controls, the Pelican pulling up instantly, this thing was damn repsonsive.

Kelly was working the scanners on the Pelican, now realising there were no guns to operate.

"2 Enemy airbourne craft in bound, we aren't gonna out run these!" she intructed.

"Roger that, lets play cat and mouse then!" i said gunning the craft forwards.

As we headed away from the warehouse there was an almighty sonic boom as it blew to pieces.

"Sorry guys couldn't wait, wanted to see the fuckers burn" Kez said, obviously detonating the explosives.

I decided the only way we would get away from the trailing enemy Pelicans that were in tow would be to fly dangerously low through the main city. I threw the controls to the left heading for the mass of sky scrapers that were once in the distance.

"Here we go, come on bitches follow me!" i exclaimed as we darted down now just above the road, zooming above cars on the road.

"Another 2 enemy tango's inbound" Kelly informed me.

"Roger that, i've got a plan" i replied "Kez light em up when they get within range and cover our rear"

"Way ahead of you dude" he replied.

It must've been a sight to behold for the average joe, a UNSC Pelican

being hounded by 2 well 4 now, Enemy painted pelicans. I weaved around the streets and did a hard left round the first of the sky scrapers, while i did this i heard Kez lighting up the rear gun. It must've taken one of them by surprise as the went wider trying to avoid the gun fire, and hurtled and exploded into one of the skyscrapers, the explosion so big it actually rocked the entire structer and sent the top half tipping to the side, with this i pulled up and looped over the collapsing part of the tower.

"Warn me when your doing that next time! i almost went out the back!" Kez shouted through.

I didn't have time to reply to him, i was more focused on actually surviving this than argueing over evasive moneuvres. I was sweating buckets n my suit, thankfully Chrystal had realised and cooled the suit some more, she really knew how to look after a man.

There was another boom.

"Yeeehaaaaaaa mutherfuckers, you like the taste of lead do ya!" Kez exclaimed as another Pelican was sent hurtling to the ground, unfortunatly it went straight into a fueling station below and exploded in the biggest fireball i've ever seen.

"Damn it just can't shake the last 2" i said.

"What about the tunnel through the mountain just to the east of us?" Kez suggested

"Are you crazy!" Kelly exclaimed.

"Yes, yes i am!" i replied and turned our Pelican towards it stooping lower and lower "Hold on to your seats ladies, its about to get bumpy!"

With that we shot into the tunnel at maximum speed, in land speed 245mph, everything was a blur around us, but i just focused on the tunnel ahead, we scraped and bumped the roof and sides of the tunnel a few times cutting it mighty close to just crashing.

One of the pelicans had got the entry all wrong behind us and had exploded into the top of the entrance, i thought it had got the 2nd enemy pelican but unfortunatly it emerged through the fire and smoke behind us, at which point Kez let off controlled bursts, but didn't hit the craft as it was just out of range.

I clipped one of the main support beams for the tunnel, wthout meaning to.

"SHIT! HURRY THE FUCK UP!" Kelly screamed "THE TUNNEL IS COLLAPSING, THAT BEAM GAVE WAY!"

I slammed my feet as hard as possible on the power pedals trying to get as much speed as possible.

"KEZ FUCK THE GUN STRAP IN THIS IS GONNA BE TIGHT" I shouted through.

Behind us the whole entire tunnel was collapsing, it was catching the enemy pelican that was also now gunning it behind us to get out the

other side. Ahead i could see a tiny spec of light, it was the tunnels exit.

"COME ON BABY COME ON!" i shouted through gritted teeth. We were certainly hurtling onwards, the engines of the Pelican straining now as they were more than maxed out at nearly 270mph.

Everything was sort of moving in slow motion, just a slow blur as we hurtled forwards, many thoughts ran through my head, but all i could focus on was the spec of light that was getting bigger and bigger as we neared the exit.

"WE AINT GONNA MAKE IT!" Kez shouted

I ignored it, we were so close, the collapsing tunnel was grating the enemy pelican right behind us, it was so fucking close!

" " i screamed as i squeezed the controls ever tighter in my hands.

We flashed out into daylight not a moment too soon, the tunnel crushing the enemy pelican just before the exit.

" FUCK " I shouted at the top of my lungs "HOLY FUCK YEAH"

I yanked the controls back and we shot up into the air the mountain behind rocked slightly causing massive landslides and avalanches. We narrowly avoided the roofs of buildings directly out of the tunnel. Warning lights were flashing all over the Pelican, i decided to ease off the power slightly but not much, and pulled the girl up heading for the atmosphere.

"Luck Bastard" Yep certainly lived up to its reputation.

Kelly was stunned, sat in shock shaking like a leaf sweating more than anyone could possibly sweat.

I was sat in shock at what i had actually just done, considering i had no flight time and no training in piloting a craft, thank god for Chrystal putting up a few things on my HUD.

"You okay back there Kez?" i asked over the comms.

"Yeah but i think i'm gonna need some fresh underwear and combats when we get back." he said nerves all in his voice.

I didn't want to know what it looked like out the back of the pelican, all i knew is we were alive and weren't far away from exiting the planet. Kelly managed to control herself enough to close the Pelicans rear hatch from the console, allowing me to enter the atmosphere and head on back to the UNSC Gorgon.

"UNSC Gorgon, this is task force Zulu, we have the package, repeat we have the package, over" i transmitted.

"Roger that Taskforce Zulu, see you back home over and out" the Captains voice replied.

I sat back in my seat and relaxed a little knowing the UNSC Gorgon had us covered now until we docked. Crap. How the fuck was i supposed

to land this thing? with that thought Chrystal flagged up the auto docking button.

"Thanks Chrystal" i replied.

"Not a problem handsome" Chrystal replied.

Kelly had calmed down a fair amount and Kez sat unusually quiet in the back of the craft. I just directed to craft calmly towards Bay 1 on the UNSC Gorgon and then hit the auto dock button. Luckily it still worked and the crafted piloted itself into the bay and set down on Pad 3. I powered off the engines and stood up, my legs felt like jelly but i managed to stand. Kelly had stumbled up and into the back of the craft, Kez and her hugged, and walked off the craft arms around each other.

Amazingly they looked good together i thought. As i jumped off the people in Bay 1 gave us a rapturous round of applause and cheers, i wondered why. The Captain walked forwards through the gathered staff.

"Sergeant Hill, thats fucking fine job you did there!" He actually swore.

"Thank you sir, not sure we deserve the applause and stuff though" i replied.

"I'm afraid to say the ships A.I. patched through the footage from inside the Pelican and your helmet cam, instead of sending it to the private line in my office, but its gone down well and that was some mighty fine flying, and Lieutenant Hill excellent work on the consoles and conserving the UNSC Data." he replied sounding rather cheery.

"Staff Sergeant" he said turning to Kez "Mighty fine job defending the package, i expect to see all 3 of you on the bridge shortly after you have been debriefed." He turned and walked off.

The ships crew started cheering and shouting out things to us, we had become somewhat of a legendary team already, well at least on the Gorgon anyway, i just couldn't believe the ships A.I. had "accidently" patched it to all stations on the ship, either way it had been a massive morale booster for the crew.

Kez and Kelly turned to me and just hugged me without saying anything. I returned the hugs and we then started to walk out of the bay, i was about to take my helmet off when Chrystal said something.

"Steve, well done today, very proud" she said before cutting off.

"Thanks Chrystal" i said softly and took my helmet off.

We walked exhausted through the ship to the elevator to the level of the bridge, back on familiar ground. We headed for our debrief but unsurprisingly we got there and the guy had already done the paper work.

The Captain gave us all honary distinctions, and passed through the

details to ONI who had wanted the Pelican rescued. God knows what they wanted it for but im sure we wouldn't find out even though we had been through all that to rescue it.

We got dragged down to the Mess Hall for celebrations, and celebrations we had indeed. I can't even begin to describe how much alchol we all consumed but the atmosphere was fantastic, and we sang and danced onwards through the night. All i remember was hitting it off with some young Ensign and heading to her quarters.

I sure was gonna have a hell of a hangover in the morning!

## 6. Chapter 6: Outpost Bravo Two

**\*\*Chapter 6: Outpost Bravo Two. 4 Months later...\*\***

It has been a while since our last mission, we were now working on behalf of ONI rather than the UNSC, though we still remained on the UNSC Gorgon for the time being. We had helped retrieve a Pelican with vital data held within it, we had also been sent out to retrieve the corpse of a dead Spartan, why we did that we weren't told, classified was the reply i'd gotten when i had asked.

I was sat in the gym changing rooms, after having just done my usual workout, when was again called over the ships comms, though this time i was asked to meet in the observations room. I got changed as quick as i could and headed off to meet them for whatever hell they had planned for me.

I walked in to see Kez already there, and again my sister Lieutenant Kelly Hill. In front of them was a sphere, obviously a planet, with dots flashing and things lighting up, i quite liked these 3D things that could be produced and hover in front of us, it made it so easy to see what everyone was talking about. Our ONI Commander that had been sent to the UNSC Gorgon to take command of our relatively small team emerged from behind the planet on display.

"Commander Braskov, what we got planned now?" i casually asked.

"Well i'm about to explain" he said whilst pacing back and forth like he usually did, hands behind his back. He was quite elderly and obviously wasn't stationed out on the battlefield he was purely a desk jockey who had all the power, probably more pay than us aswell.

"Right well get to it sir" Kez chimed in.

"We are sending in your squad aswell as a tech team to this outpost here" he said as a small outpost became enlarged in front of us "It's of significant importance to us that this construct does NOT fall into enemy hands, the Covenant are almost certainly on the planet and looking for any of our facilities to aquire data from."

"So its a protect, wipe and destroy job?" i questioned.

"Not quite, the Covenant forces are very weak, scouts at most, we need to keep this facility for as long as possible, and hopefully never lose it, its use i can't inform you of, again thats classified

information on a need to know basis, and right now you don't need to know" he explained "Your team won't be alone, you will be accompanied by a squad of 3 Spartans, thats how important this place is to us, i'm sure you understand that we fully expect you to initiate self destruct and sacrifice your lives to protect what we have down there?"

"Of course sir" i replied, it was the only reply i could give.

"We will keep you posted of enemy movements up here around the planet, but in the meantime, erase all enemies that attempt to get into the facility and protect it until we can establish reinforcements, which as of the moment we don't have a definate time on when they shall arrive, it could be days it could be weeks" he continued to explain.

"Sir, surely once we start engaging the current Covenant forces down there surely they will send a backup fleet to secure and clear the planet?" Kez abruptly asked.

"That is a risk yes, but until that happens perform your duties as asked, now Sergeant Hill and Staff Sergeant Kezlowski you will utilise your drop pods to proceed to the facility as quickly as possible, the tech team will arrive on a Pelican shortly after you give the all clear for them to come in, move out!" he said before heading out the room.

We headed straight for our pods, our armour and weapons already there and waiting, we suited up and made sure all we needed was secure in our pods before climbing in. They were tight compact things but very very strong, and rapidly fast, they would easily burn through the atmosphere, before the chute would deploy followed by the small jet burners which slowed the craft even more.

The pods were closed by the Navy engineers in the room, we could see out of them as they had seriously toughened glass it made for an amazing view as we zoomed down to planets it also helped once we had landed so we could see a portion of the area around us to prepare for what waited.

3, 2, 1, and woosh were were jetisoned from the UNSC Gorgon at a rapid rate, headed straight for the area surrounding the construct, if there were any Covenant down there they were in for a surprise. We screamed through the atmosphere and shortly after we did the chute shot out above slowing the pod, the jet burners then started to ignite and soon the craft was slowed, though still hurtling at a substantial speed. Boom. That was the sound that radiated as the Drop Pod slammed into the ground, as it did so, i grabbed my weapons placed beside me and hit the door release button, it fired the door away and i jumped out, scanning the area.

Kez had landed about 50 meters ahead of me. Satisified it was clear i grabbed the rest of my gear from the pod and headed towards Kez whom had landed a couple of meters away from the side of the construct.

"Cut that close didn't you?" i said to him.

"Didn't i just, thought for a moment i would be smashing through and into the place" Kez replied whilst collecting the last of his gear

from the pod.

We headed to the only access door to the Facility. It was a 2 floor construct, with a covered balcony type roof, that would prove a good place to take out enemies around the place without being jumped on from above cos of the sort of roof it had covering the thing.

I swiped my ONI access card and punched in the password on the pad that emerged, the doors were so thick even a Scorpion tank wouldn't get through them, there was a huge sound of locks disengaging before the door opened. It was dark inside, Kez and I both switched to our night vision Visr mode, and headed on slowly, the door slammed and locked violently behind us.

It felt eery inside, cold even, didn't feel like the usual building you went in. It was so dark we couldn't make out much even with our night mode on, so we kept stumbling over chairs and consoles and various other stuff as we tried to find some form of power to turn on.

"Right i give up, lets just stand still a minute before we destroy stuff and hurt ourselves" Kez said obviously fed up of not being able to see.

"Chrystal, see if you can initiate the lighting in here, we can't see fuck all" i said to her.

"I will try, i have no uplink to the UNSC Gorgon somethings obstructing communications in here" she replied.

I didn't like the sound of that, why on earth would they block communication systems inside especially UNSC and ONI designed ones? It was a question i wasn't sure i wanted the answer to.

Sure enough Chrystal found the lights, they all flickered on around us revealing the room we were in. It was some form of lab, ONI splashed on the walls in big bold writing, around us there were various stations with consoles on, aswell as a few lab tables. Ahead of us was the stairs that led up to the roof, balcony thing, and just to the left was a huge lift that could only go down, it was locked a huge blast door on it preventing us from getting inside of it. To the right of us was a slightly raised platform with 5 stasis pods.

It was what was inside these that sent shivers up and down my back. Two of the pods were damaged, and unused, but the other three remained occupied. Inside the first one was a young man, though he seemed to have robotic limbs and was all plugged in to the pod electrically, it was horrific to look at. In pod 2 there appeared to be a half developed human or something, god knows what it was but it sure as hell wasn't normal. Pod 3 contained a young woman, seemingly nothing done to her, though god knows what they had done inside of her.

"Are you seeing this?" i asked Kez

"Yeah... What the fuck is this place?" Kez said confused and worry in his voice "and that lift there, i mean why the fuck is there a lift in here? something doesn't add up, this doesn't feel right!"

He certainly had a point and i could only agree with him. I went over

to the consoles, they all seemed dead and unusable, even though the power was definatly on in the facility.

"Over here" Kez shouted from the back of the room, he had gone round the corner near the lift.

I wandered over, still looking over the place, and eventually turned the corner. It was nothing more than a few shelves with some supplies and other various objects on but Kez was crouched on the floor in the corner.

"Whats up?" i asked, wondering what he was doing.

"Look at this! What the fuck is going on!" he exclaimed.

I walked over and saw a young scientist, sprawled, propped up against some shelves. He was definatly dead, though it couldn't of been to long ago as he hadn't began decomposing. His chest was all ripped open and his insides were all scrambled, there was a yellow tint to his skin and face.

"Right, keep your eyes open, theres no way we are alone here, not with that, i want answers!" i exclaimed.

We both switched our safteys off on our weapons and made sure for definate that the lab was clear, it was, so the only place the thing that had done that could be was in the lift or deep underground. If it had gotten out over the roof then i guess alot of things were fucked and doomed to death.

We made our way up the stairs to the roof door, i had to swipe my access card and punch in the password again to open the door. The roof would of just been a typical open roof if it wasn't for the curved cover above us, but all the sides were open, with low walls and a few ralings forming the confines of it.

"Comms are back Steve" Chrystal informed me.

"Command, this is Team Zulu, area surrounding the facility is clear, send in the Pelican" i messaged.

"Roger that, Pelican dispatched, over" Command replied.

"That's not all, one dead scientist inside, his insides were completely scrambled, we were unable to locate what the hell had done it, now i suggest you tell us just what the hell is down here with us" i demanded.

"Negative, situation is under control Spartan team Oscar-Six will deal with any bogeys inside, Over and out" Command said and cut the transmission.

"Fuck me, so we were the fucking guinea pigs to see if there was anything inside before they risked their best men, well what a bunch of assholes" i furiously spat out.

"Amen to that" Kez said.

The Pelican was soon dropping off the squad of techs and the 3 Spartans, who entered the building the Pelican then hovered with its



bay open to the edge of the roof, passing a couple of ammor crates to us and also a couple of mounted machine guns, which actually came with a Marine to use them.

Why would we be sent so much stuff if this was a simple protect job?

We set up one of the machine turrets with a clear aim down the valley in front, and set the other up on the rear of the roof aiming down the same vally just in the opposite direction. The weird thing was this structure was located at a sort of T junction, so one side was against a sheer cliff of sorts, with just 3 sides open to fire. the remaining side that needed covering i set up a mounted Sniper rifle, and allowed the trained sniper who had jumped off the Pelican to man it. Me and Kez headed back inside to see what we were actually doing, the Spartans had assumed control of this mission, much to my displeasure but they were the best soldiers we had so it was only right i suppose.

"Okay guys where are we?" I asked as i walked up to the 3 Spartans who were in conversation.

"You two are coming with us, down below" The lead Spartan replied.

"Excellent, shall we?" i said motioning towards the lift.

Me and Kez formed up either side of the lift door, whilst the Spartans just stood casually in front of it, with one of them tapping on the console in the middle of the door. After a few seconds a siren sounded and a yellow light flashed as the huge door began to open. It was a huge cargo lift, definatly used to transport things of significant size.

The door opened and we all jumped inside the lift, as soon as we had it began descending down into the deep depths of the planet below. The Spartans stood there silent and motionless, whilst me and Kez made sure our weapons were loaded properly and ready for combat.

I felt the lift begin to slow, we were almost at the bottom of the sheft the lift had gone down, the floor that we had lift not even visible above us. We were right down at the bottom.

The door for the floor in front of us began to open, as it did so, it appeared there was catastrophic damage down here, lights flickered on and off and sparks from various outlets kept spraying about.

"what the hell?" one of the Spartans muttered.

If they are saying that, then even they were surprised, that in my view was not the reaction i was looking for. Me and Kez switched on our night mode on our Visr, and stepped out to either side of the lift, checking the flanks, but it was one corridor that led straight to a double door ahead, god knows what was beyond that.

The Spartans moved on up to it and we moved up behind them turning and covering everyones backs. The door opened and the Spartans tapped our shoulders to let us know we could move forwards, they had spread out and were already in the room. We moved in and stood there in awe of what was in the middle of the room.

A huge sort of blue energy cell was there, glistening and glinting, below it was some form of Cryo tube, the Spartans were trying to gain access to it as we watched.

"Damn it, the system is fried, the life form inside is dead" The lead Spartan said dismayed.

"Well lets move on" one of the other ones replied.

We moved forwards to the only door on the other side of this room, it opened and it was pitch black, darker than the building up top when we had first entered.

The Spartans disappeared inside, i looked and Kez and we both shrugged and followed them in. They really didn't seem to want to let us in on what we were actually doing meaning it added an element of confusion as to where we were going.

We ambled aimlessly in the dark corridor, lucky that the floor was clear otherwise we would of probably fallen over and knocked ourselves out by now. We kept walking and there was light ahead of us, it was the next room. As usual me and Kez went in one of us on either side, just incase even though there were friendlies that had gone in ahead of us.

The room was a mess, though the lights worked properly, desks were overturned, work stations were completely destroyed and there were papers and data pads strewn everywhere, the Spartans nowhere to be seen.

"Where the fuck did they go?" Kez asked looking around the room.

"I would give you an answer but i was with you numpty" i replied.

As we continued to look the door we had just come in through slammed shut and locked. I had a bad feeling about this.

All of a sudden we could hear gunfire across the room and down a small corridor to the right, we advanced and took a look down it to see if we could see anything. We couldn't and decided we would move on up some more.

We came to another door, it was completely blown apart, and in front of us we could see the Spartans fighting some weird looking creatures, they looked like zombieified humans but sort of mixed with Covenant aswell.

"What the hell is that!" i exclaimed.

"ONI Experiement, tough fuckers, gone wrong though they think we are the enemy when these were created to help us!" one of the spartans replied.

The Spartans had it under control and managed to detain a couple of these things and inject them with something, they stopped moving.

"Did you just kill them?" Kez asked.

"Negative, we are to deliver these alive, ONI has plans for them" The Lead spartan said.

As we scanned the room some more, it was evident these things had trashed the place, they certainly were powerful, the facilites comms suddenly came one.

"This is Overwatch, Covenant forces are engaging us, requesting back up" it was the soldiers on the roof.

"Go, we have this under control down here" the spartans replied.

We ran back to the lift somehow making it through the darkened corridor without falling over. The lift journey up seemed like an eternity, but soon enough we were there, we rushed out and up the stairs, gunfire was constant and loud by the time we had got there.

Light Covenant forces eh? There was shitloads, if this was light then i'm the commander of the UNSC! The group were doing well and keeping them a distance away from the facility, the mounted turrets chattering away and destroying any Covenant that walked into its path of fire, the Sniper was sat just picking off Elite after Elite, making sure to get the Grunts all scared.

Me and Kez took a corner of the roof each and started laying down fire, with the sniper taking the elites we took the Grunts and Jackals that were missed by the turrets, we proved a fairly formidable team, and for once it was the Covenant having to come up with an idea to try and break defenses rather than the other way around.

We held out like this for quite some time, about 3 hours, the Covenant forces not letting up or showing signs of there being very few of them. It was at this point the shit finally slapped all over the fan.

"3 Enemy Raiths, 5 Ghosts inbound" The sniper said whilst still casually reeling off shots.

"Fuck sake, right lets see if we can drum up air support" I replied.

"Command this is Team Zulu, requesting air support on local mechanised support over" I spoke into the comms.

"Negative Zulu, air support is unavailable right now" came the reply.

"What do you mean unavailable? you want us to die out here? do you want us to fail this oh so important mission? fuck you command" i shouted back and cut the comms.

"No support then?" asked Kez.

I didn't feel i needed to dignify that with an answer so left it, and trained my aim on one of the gunners on the closest Raith. Lucky for us we had the reinforced roofing thing above us, meaning unless it was supremely accurate the Raith's wouldn't be able to hit us. The sniper meanwhile worked on picking off the Ghosts, he had gotten 3 of

the 5 and was close to getting the remaining 2.

The battle continued, the night began to fall, but night time here was only 3 hours long the rest was complete daylight, but 3 hours of darkness could be what turned it in the Covenant forces favour.

In the time we had been battling we had worked our way through 3/4 of an ammor crate, not to bad but meant we had just over 1 ammo crate remaining and with no evac or air support available this could prove a problem.

"Hold the line im heading back down see how the situation is below" i spoke out, they continued to fire so i assume they had heard me.

Back inside you could barely hear the outside battle, i looked around and the Spartans hadn't come back up, due to comms not being able to penetrate the walls i had to come inside to talk to them over comms inside the walls.

"Team Zulu here, hows things below?" i asked.

All i got was static and silence.

"I repeat, this is Team Zulu do you read me over" i requested again.

Nothing but static.

"Chrystal, scan for lifeforms below please" i demanded of her.

"18 lifeforms detected, 8 Covenant, 7 unknown lifeforms and 3 Spartans" she chimed back.

Bugger! There was obviously another access point somewhere further along the complex underground. I ran back up and grabbed Kez, the other men would hold the line fairly easily for the time being.

"What the hell man!" he exclaimed.

"Just had a scan, 18 lifeforms below, 8 Covenant, 7 Unknowns probably them weird things, and the 3 Spartans, lets go!" i informed and ordered.

We grabbed some more ammo and jumped in the lift, knowing full well this could be our last journey we would make with each other. Locking and loading we moved to the sides of the lift so we could cover each other out of the lift.

"How far are the nearest lifeforms Chrystal?" i asked.

"Further along than where we got to last time" she replied.

The lift stopped and we ran out of it, down the destroyed corridor and into the first room we had came to before, we then ran down the darkest corridor night vision activated although it helped very little such was the darkness of the place, we reached the 2nd room, it was empty and we advanced onwards.

3 rooms later we could finally hear the sound of battle, human weapons so the Spartans were definatly fighting, we rounded the corner and into the huge room ahead, the 8 Covenant were only sodding Elites, one was about to slash down one of the Spartans with its power sword but me and Kez put paid to that and ripped its head apart with a few controlled bursts, with this the other Elites ducked back into cover.

I grabbed the Spartan that had almost been slashed to hell and dragged him behind cover, Kez covering me as i did so. I didn't know if he was alive or not i assumed he was as his sheild type protector on his suit recharged.

"Fuckin hell, lucky we arrived when we did eh?" i said to him unleashing a burst of lead on an Elite that had tried to move up.

"Thanks, much appreciated" the Spartan replied seeming suddenly better.

"Kez, lets flank them while the Spartans draw their fire" i said over our teams comms.

"Roger that" Kez replied.

We moved up either side of the room, and wiped out the first line of Covenant, 3 Elites biting the dust. 4 remained, these however seemed alot different and higher ranking, but so little was the intel we had on the Covenant forces ranks we didn't know if they were or not, either way they seemed alot more tactful.

"Human filth!" a voice said behind me and soon i was thrown through the air and smashed down into a load of crates back where we had entered the room. I lay dazed and confused and felt like i had been hit by a train.

An Elite had moved up silently and got round behind me, i hadn't realised and what had happened was with his bare strength it had thrown me across the room. I didn't move i was more concerned with not falling unconcious. I saw someone above me grab me and pull me to my feet. I hadn't seen this person here before and was so god damn confused.

"On your feet Soldier!" the man bellowed at me.

I swayed a little and stumbled forwards to some cover behind a load of stacked crates. Who the hell is that, then as my mind refocused i finally realised it was Commander Braskov. On the battlefield? what in gods name was going on!

He was clad in armour but only had a hand gun and was firing rather wildly.

The Spartans had moved up and were where i had been before having a free flying lesson, the Elite that had thrown me had been masacred by the Spartans and lay twisted and dead on the floor, Kez had managed to stick a frag grenade close enough to another just as a Spartan had knocked its armour off, sure enough all that remained were 2 smoking Elite feet on the floor.

The last 2 Elites seemed suddenly nervous and were spraying plasma anywhere and everywhere, i thought we should just let their plasma run out but remembered their plasma swords which were frickin vicious.

"Take them alive!" Commander Braskov demanded.

"Don't think thats gonna happen" i replied unleashing half a clip of lead onto one the Elites chests knocking its sheilds down, this was followed by an accuratly placed, crushing punch by one of the Spartans, its fist actually sinking inside of the Elite.

"I said take them alive god dammit!" the Commander spat angrily.

The spartans actually managed to detain the last Elite, and knock it out with a well placed kick to its head.

"Excellent, team lets get rid of this back to the main building" he ordered as tech guys suddenly came running out from behind us.

"Sergeant Hill, why did you not remain on the roof? Your mission was to protect the facility not to nose around inside of it!" he angrily said to me.

"Well without us here, you could of kissed goodbye to my Spartan over there, and we did protect the place, but after requesting a sit rep and not getting a reply to make sure the mission was acheived we headed down to try and help." i explained.

"You do realise you have broken every clearance that we gave you, this is worthy of the highest punishment available" He again directed at me angrily.

"Yeah well next time, if there is a next time how about you fucking retards inform us of the full story, because when the shit hits the fan we ain't gonna know what we are facing or anything, you think its fine sending us down here as your sodding guinea pigs all the fucking time, just another piece of dirt that you think you can play with freely and easily, well sorry chum we are human beings aswell and we are all in this god damn mutherfucking fight together, i'm not here to die i'm here to make sure we all fucking survive, so next time, you better hope and pray you tell me the full story or you will seriously regret it." I spat out absolutly furious, loading a fresh mag into my Battle Rifle and turning the safety off again.

"I am your Commander you will do as i..."

It was at this point i shoved him onto the floor and pointed my rifle straight at his face, so close he could probably taste the metal.

"I suggest you shut up! How does it feel huh? coming down here to this unexpected reaction? having a weapon pointed straight at your face? not knowing that this was going to happen? Not fucking nice is it? So how does it feel, sitting waiting for a fucking bullet to fire out of this rifle and rip your fucking head to pieces?" I was in a furious rage right now, the look in the Commanders face was plain and utter horrific fear.

I stood holding the gun at his face, the 3 Spartans stood just

looking on, Kez doing the same.

I seriously considered shooting the bastard, i even gripped the trigger a little harder, but i didn't i restrained myself not to give him the satisfaction of getting out of this war early, i wanted him to live and suffer with the knowledge he sent men to their deaths day in day out because in his words it was a neccasary sacrifice.

I put the safety back on, and stepped back. As i did so the Commander stood up and went to punch me, i'd seen it coming though and stepped to the side and smashed his arm down with my rifle before ramming the butt of the gun in his face knocking him out cold with a seriously broken arm. I gave him a kick for good measure and left him, one of the tech medics soon rushed over to him and started trying to wake the man.

"Impressive" Kez said.

"Thanks, shall we go finish off these bloody experiments now?" i asked the group. They all nodded and we proceeded onwards.

"One last thing, lets fuckng kill the rest of these fucking things, ive had enough of babysitting and collecting things which are all fucked up and wrong anyway." One of the Spartans spoke out.

We all agreed, i switched mags to my explosive rounds, these fuckers wouldn't know what hit them...

## 7. Chapter 7: Outpost Brave Two: Part 2

### \*\*Chapter 7: Outpost Bravo Two, Part 2\*\*

We all headed down the long corridor to a huge hall like room, this is where the 7 life readings were located accordng to Chrystal, we were weapons ready, and i had loaded in my explosive rounds. I only had 1 mag of these so i had to make them count.

We came to the door, the light on it showed red and was locked, the Spartans took a minute but soon the light showed green and it opened.

Inside were the 7 beastly looking things, they were all going mental randomly smashing stuff and destroying it in one swift move every time. We silently formed a line across the far end of the room, each picking a target, i had my eyes on 2 dog like things, i say dog, they were bloody huge probably the size of a pony.

"Alright boys lets light them up!" the lead Spartan exclaimed.

Our guns flashed to life as each bullet shot out of the barrells of our weapons, my explosive rounds made light work of the dog like creatures and they were soon dead on the floor, the Spartans seemed to work together concentrating fire on 1 target at a time, they got one and that left just 4 of these scummy things left.

One of them was different and moved so god damn fast, it ended up in a hand to hand combat situation with all 3 Spartans, but they made light work of that, they specialised in pretty much everything. Its body was broken in multiple places and a few rounds of assault rifle

made sure it was definatly dead.

Kez had also nailed one, he had thrown a sticky plasma grenade from the Elites earlier onto it and blown it to oblivion. With this the last two things decided to storm us, but my explosive rounds cut one down, it hadn't been particularly good shots though, what i had done was severe its legs from its body and it was now dragging itself along by its arms, i placed one swift round to its head which exploded nicely.

Kez launched his combat knife through the air and buried it into the last one which was leaping at the Spartans, it was a mighty impressive throw, the power of the blade slicing through the thing, then sent it sideways and actually impaled it on the wall, it was dead for sure.

"Damn thats a hell of a throw!" i exclaimed.

The Spartans stood nodding in approval and actually accepted Kez's high fives.

"Facility is clear, shall we get out of here?" i said to the team.

"No can do Helljumper, you won't be returning to the UNSC Gorgon" the lead Spartan said.

"Well why the fuck am i not told anything, its like hello im right fucking here just sodding well tell me" I was getting angry again.

"Its because you are now being transferred to a highly classified department with us, at my request i might add, so shutup whinge bag and come with us." he said motioning towards a door we hadn't been through.

"What about Kez?" i said standing there still.

"I'm afraid he's not included in this, sorry Staff Sergeant" he said apologetically to Kez.

"Look Steve, just go i'll look after your sister, now go get yourself out of here" He instructed whilst running off back to the main facility to catch the evac Pelican.

Well i had no choice now, Kez had gone and locked the door back to the Pelican on his way, there was only one thing to do now and that was follow the Spartans. What i was getting involved in i had no idea but it probably was a new version of hell.

"Well lets go then" i said to them.

We all proceeded to the door on the far side of the room, the door i assumed led to another access point where the Covenant had got in, this side of the facility seeming undamaged. Surprisingly the access point was one room away so we were soon topside, night had come and gone and we were in blazing morning sunlight. The tunnel network underground had brought us out the other side of the cliff behind the first facility, there weren't any Covenant here, but what was here was a ready and waiting Pelican, not in the usual UNSC green paint



though, this was one was black with a red stripe down it, ONI splashed on the side of it instead of UNSC aswell.

I followed the Spartans onboard the Pelican and we flew off, leaving behind the facility, the direction we were headed was in the complete opposite direction that the UNSC Gorgon was, i must say i was rather dismayed at leaving behind all i had known since i had begun my journey to becoming an ODS, but this was a war and i would fight where i was needed.

"Where are we headed?" i asked over the noise of the Pelican.

"All will be revealed in good time, just sit tight until we arrive" The lead Spartan replied.

I wasn't best pleased about not even knowing what ship i was being transferred to, i just hoped i'd still be able to speak to my sister after only just getting back to knowing her again, but im sure Kez would do as he said and look after her.

"Docking in 2 ladies and gentleman" the pilot spoke out.

Well at least i'd be where ever it was we were headed shortly. I looked out the small window on the rear of the Pelican, we had definatly left the planet below, and i could see its towns and cities now being destroyed, the Covenant were definatly there and it was being completely glassed. Glassed, i wondered why it was called that, i know the particle beam used to exterminate life on the planet pretty much wiped everything out, maybe it turned the sand to glass on the planet or what i don't know, i don't even know why i'm thinking about this.

The Pelican entered the bay of the new ship i was to be onboard, it looked alot more up to date than the small UNSC Gorgon, loads of new model Pelicans were stationed on pads all around the bay, including a fully fledged fleet of Hornets aswell. Marines patrolled up and down in the vacant spaces in their squads in front of higher ranking staff, engineers moved machinery and worked on the various craft used to transport us troops around. It was a hive of activity.

"Welcome to the UNSC Lady Fairweather" a Spartan announced to me.

Lady Fairweather, sounds like something from the 18th century like an old fashioned sailing boat.

Our Pelican hovered briefly before setting down on what was labelled Pad 27, the Spartans jumping off first, with me in tow. There was an Admiral waiting in front of me with a single piece of paper in his hands. The Spartans nodded at him and proceeded onwards whilst he ushered me to walk with him.

I slung my gun on my back and took my helmet off putting it under my arm, and continued what was the most silent walk ive had in my life.

We walked at a steady pace down the long corridor that led off the bay we had landed in, walking through navy personnel and engineers who went about their buisness without so much as glancing at us. A few guards guarding stairs and stuff saluted but other than that we

seemed invisible to the crew. The walk was taking forever, whatever class this ship was it was damn huge.

We reached a door which the Admiral stopped at, he keyed in a code and we walked inside. It was dark at first but lights almost immediatly came on, in front of us was a long oak table obviously used for briefings and the like. He took a seat at the end of the table still without speaking a word, and then motioned with his hand for me to also sit.

I sat and waited, it seemed like an eternity, the Admiral reading the paper in front of him thoroughly.

"Sergeant Hill... hmmm, impressive" he muttered to himself still reading the paper.

"Thank you Sir" i replied, to no response.

I sat in silence for a few more minutes, pouring myself a glass of whatever the juice was in the middle of the table, it tasted good thats all that mattered.

"Well, seems i have a very capable pair of hands onboard my ship, first time in a long time i can assure you" He spoke, with a voice that had appeared from nowhere "We have something special for you lined up..."

I really hated it when people left sentences hanging like that, but anyway i was intrigued.

"Sir" i replied.

"Now we have established a few areas with which we can enhance your abilities further, this requires a certain few procedures to be carried out, you won't be a Spartan but you will be the best human soldier at our disposal, you will however be teamed with the Spartan squad that assisted you today." He explained to me rather dry.

"You mean to say that i will be injected with chemicals and shit like that? Is it even safe?" i questioned.

"Safe enough to ensure you will live with much enhanced skills yes" he replied.

"Okay, well let me ask you another question, do i have any choice in this anyway?" i asked him bluntly.

"None. You are to report to Deck C, the chryo deck and go to the Laboratory at the end of the corridor with chryo rooms" he said rather sounding fed up of this.

"Yes sir, anything else i should know?" i asked.

"Yes. It will be the most painful experience you will ever have" he answered.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>2 Months Later...<strong>

I was suddenly awake, completely and utterly disorientated, what the hell was going on! I opened my eyes my vision blurred from the long slumber i had been put in, my hearing muffled and not really functioning as i awoke.

"Wakey wakey" a voice said to me, still sounding distant.

"wha... where?" i mumbled.

"I'll come back to you" the person said and walked off.

I lay there trying to wake myself up properly, i rubbed my eyes and made them water a little which helped clear them, i grabbed the glass of water the person had left near to the Chryo pod i was in and gulped it down, my throat feeling refreshed and cleared by it, also swallowing popped my ears and i got hear clearly again.

Looking around i could see i was in the main Chryo bay where i had been since these procedures had began 2 months or so ago. The person that had tried to wake me was the surgeon who had been performing the procedures, and was tapping away at a console on the far side, music blaring, a familiar band actually as i myself listened to the classic 21st century stuff to, Jimmy Eat World being the band of choice at the moment.

"Hey doc" i shouted across to him.

"Ah your awake, want me to turn it down?" he replied.

"No actually i was gonna ask if you could turn it up" i said beaming a smile as he did so.

Probably one of my all time favourite albums to. It had helped to wake me up as me and the doc started belting out the lyrics as i got dressed in the crappy outfit they provided down here in the Chryo chamber. We proceeded to also do a bit of air guitar and drums whilst listening to it, man if every morning was as good as this i'd be in heaven, it was moments like this where you're just having a laugh and rocking out that helped get you through the tough moments.

"Ah well i spose we better crack on" the doc said as the song finished.

"Yeah whats in store for me today then?" i asked assuming more painful procedures to come my way.

"Absolutly nothing, its just rehabilitation now all the stuff will come in within the next 24 hours, so although you feel fine and normal now you will notice huge huge changes by the end of the next 24 hours and you might find it hard to do the simple things like pick up a cup so just rehabilitation when things start to develop" he explained.

"So what do i do in the meantime?" i asked.

"Well you stay here, as i wouldn't reccomend being far away from medical attention" the doc said.

"Okay doc, whatever you say" i said as plopped myself down into a chair that was near his workstation.

There was a small table in front with a few magazines and the latest gizmo that was sort of like a hand held computer. I decided that i'd sit and play a few games on it, the latest management game was one i especially liked football/soccer manager, was very enjoyable i could pick any football or soccer team from any of the colonies, made for a huge variety i was something of a dab hand at this and logged into my account and loaded up my save this would keep me entertained for a while at least.

Time ticked by and eventually boredom kicked in, here i was on a huge ship and the only parts i had seen of it was the landing bay, a corridor and an office and now the chryo bay. Man it sucked, after being used to being out in the thick of battle protecting squads of marines and defending facilities from the Covenant this slower paced life really was slow.

I began to feel dizzy though, and sure enough the doctor realised the changes were rapidly kicking in, i tried to focus but i couldn't and suddenly i was unconscious.

I awoke, i didn't know how much time had passed but i was awake, but not in a chryo tube, i was laying under the familiar light blue bed spread of the medical bay. I say medical bay it was a private room with just me in it in my bed, with a few machines around me and a painting on the wall that was supposed to instill tranquil thoughts, looked like a piece of shit to me though.

"Ah you are awake, excellent" the same doctor said next to me.

I was a little surprised but i should of expected him to be lurking somewhere, like a rapist lurks in a dark alley waiting for a victim to walk past. He grabbed a chart and mumbled in approval at whatever it was that he was reading, i still wasn't entirely sure just what these procedures had done to me but i guess i would find out.

"Now Sergeant, the procedures have worked alot better than expected, we only expected minimal improvements but the improvements showing on the tests show you are in the top 1%, please stay in bed and rest some more whilst i consult the higher command as to what to do now" he said whilst ambling off out of the room.

Better than expected eh? well thats either good or bad, good as it means i could be the best of the best or bad because it now could mean i face an entire shit storm of crappy missions and stuff.

Sure enough the doctor returned, he approached the end of the bed and looked at me, he had a complete pokerface on which i really couldn't make head nor tail of.

"Go on doc what is it" i said.

"Well, lets just say that you are in for one hell of a ride once you are out of here, you are being transferred, into a lone wold squad, in other words you will be the most covert ODS the UNSC has at its disposal." he said raising his voice towards the end.

"So i'm like some form of super soldier?" i asked.

"Indeed, you could say that yes, not at the Spartan level but pretty

damn close" he replied "now, lets get you into rehab, this will be interesting"

Surprisingly i didn't feel different at all and passed rehab with flying colours, from physical movement to the more technical thought tests and stuff, the scientists were impressed and cleared me for active duty.

I finally got to see some of the ship out of all of that milarky, i headed straight for the bar even though it was against docs orders, but hell i hadn't had a drink in so long i bloody well deserved one.

Walking along i noticed scars on my arms and knew i had some all down my back, when they said it would be the most pain i had experienced in my life they weren't joking all through the procedures even though they gave anasthetics and stuff i could still feel the pain, it was undescrivable and i wished to never experience anything like it again. I couldn't talk about it either i was bound to keep it under wraps which was a right bitch.

At last the bar came into sight, this damn ship was huge, i had been walking a good 20-30 minutes down this god damn thing. Still just meant i was gasping for a nice cool drink more, i propped up at the bar, and was instantly greated by a stunning brunetter behind the bar, she looked absolutly stunning, her hair cut short, with a pierced bottom lip to one side, a stud in instead of a ring. She actually looked so god damn cute and innocent, perhaps even shy, my god i had never been in awe of a girl before but she mesmerized me completely.

"Sir? Sir? Hello?" she said waving a hand in front of my face almost blushing.

"Sorry, i really didn't mean to stare, could i have a nice cold Cider please?" i asked smiling whilst slightly embarassed i had been caught staring.

"It's okay, to be fair i usually get the fat drunks trying to touch me up so it makes a difference for a handsome sober man like yourself to actually notice me" she said rather flirtly "Sorry i... i..."

"Its okay, thanks for the compliment hun" i replied smile all across my face.

She went to the chiller and got me that heavenly drink, couldn't help but stare as she reached it out, though i diverted my eyes before she came back.

"Cheers!" i said holding up the bottle before taking a swig "its a bit dead here, where is everyone?"

"Captain banned his crew from coming to the bar so only a few sneak in for a couple, and then you, its boring, but its stopped alot of fights between the groups onboard" she replied.

"So whats your name?" i asked.

"Claire, and you?" She said.

"Steve, pleasure to meet you Claire" i replied offering a hand, which she shook lightly.

We continued to chat and talk for hours, before she finally finished her shift, i had decided to take the opportunity to arrange a date as it were and go for a meal with the lass, we agreed later tonight would be absolutly fine.

Sure enough as my luck would have it, we had to cancel as i got called to the bridge for a briefing no doubt this was my transfer to a new department or that i was being deployed to help some troops or something.

Walking into the briefing room, i looked around, the room was silent and the looks on everyones faces told me whatever it was some serious shit.

"Go on then what have i got to do"...

\* \* \*

><p><em>This is a slower going chapter than my previous ones but still keep an eye out for chapter 8 the action returns soon enough!<em>

## 8. Chapter 8: New Place

\*\*Chapter 8: New place, not so new surroundingsâ€|\*\*

"Go on then what have I got to do" I asked looking around the room.

"We have had reliable sources that clearly show one of our main colonies is under heavy Covenant attack, they have requested any backup they can get so as they can try and evac as many Civvies as possible" The Captain replied.

"Okay, when do we arrive?" I asked.

"Well we should be there any second, can't beâ€|." The Captain stopped short as we came out of SlipSpace and were instantly hit with a huge blast that knocked the power off temporarily.

Alarms immediately sounded, and crew members began running around, I regained my balance as the ship rocked violently from another heavy blast, we must of came out directly in the firing line of the Covvies ships.

"Screw that, get to your drop pod and meet up with any UNSC Forces on the ground, go soldier!" The Captain bellowed.

I gave him a quick salute before running out of the room, the ship was huge and I hadn't explored it enough to know remotely where I was going, I just followd signs saying "Launch Bay" I assumed this was the correct way, any other soldiers were also heading there.

As I ran along the long corridor that ran the length of the ship, a huge explosion happened in front of me sending a few crew members

flying, probably dead. Problem for me was now the blast door closing in front of me blocking my immediate route to the launch bay.

As I spun around I noticed the lass from the bar crouched down near a bench shaking in fear, she obviously was so inexperienced at this.

I ran over to her, without saying a word, grabbed her arm and then took a corridor that looped around the blast door that had closed, pulling her with me, I don't think she even knew what was happening and was just on auto pilot.

We ran dodging members of staff and hopping over all kinds of stuff that had fallen over, I looked up we to see we were near the launch bay. Ducking in the doors there was a drop pod sitting empty and vacant, it was definatly mine, all my gear was next to it, my first thought though was Claire, I put her in the pod strapping her in, I was going against every protocol there was taking an untrained non military person with me but, as much as they would kick up a fuss I liked the girl and wasn't about to let her get murdered up here, if she was going it would be with me putting up a fight first!

She sat shaking strapped in the pod, whilst I jumped in my black ODST combats and then the suit. I chucked a load of extra mags for my Battle Rifle and Handgun in the pod and an extra handgun and strapped it to Claires leg. I hopped in the pod, I wasn't sure if the Pod door would close but I got Chrystal to override the system and it shut, I grabbed the grab bars on either side of the seat that Claire was in, it was the only support I would have on what would be a bumpy ride.

The pod shot out the ship and zoomed to the planet, luckily with my position facing Claire I blocked the window view for her so she couldn't see what was happening, all I knew was the ship was being ripped to pieces and that our time on it was definatly over. I struggled to sturdy myself, but the operations I had, had made a difference for sure, I could feel I was stronger than before.

As we rocketed down, I turned my head and could just see out the window, I couldn't believe it the UNSC Gorgon was here aswell, again taking a huge beating but it had been improved and repaired fully since the time I had been there. I turned back as we hit the atmosphere of the planet below, Claire had her eyes firmly closed.

"Through the atmosphere in 5 seconds" Chrystal told me.

I Didn't say anything, and just held on, we were free falling toward the ground where ever it was we would be landing, I hoped in a city somewhere with immediate support, but knowing my luck we would be shit out of it.

The chutes deployed and we slowed, then the thrusters kicked in.

"Brace yourself" Chrystal warned.

I gripped harder on the handles, and with a huge thud we buried into the earth a little bit, I somehow managed to stay upright. Without so much as the dust settling I elbowed the door release behind me and the door flung off, I grabbed the Battle Rifle and jumped out, I

couldn't see anything, the dust from our landing was still clearing.

Claire's belts had released with the button press, but she remained in the pod nervously waiting.

The dust settled and I could finally see where we were, looking around I was disappointed to see we were in the middle of a thick jungle or forest, and had come to land just up on the edge of a deep gorge, which had a river running violently in it. Weird things dangled from the trees around us, we were alone, more alone than anyone on this damn planet probably.

On the bright side, we were safe, for the time being, so I decided that I could get Claire out the pod.

"Claire, hun, you okay?" I said leaning back into the pod.

"Iâ€¦ I don't knowâ€¦" She managed before bursting into tears.

I grabbed her in my arms, it probably wasn't comfortable for the girl as I was in armour but it was hopefully some comfort for her.

She calmed down and sat herself down on a rock covered in moss type stuff near the pod, whilst I decided to get up a map courtesy of Chrystal.

"You are joking, we are fucking miles away from anything" I said angrily.

"Sorry Steve, I couldn't adjust the pods course because of the ships positioning and circumstances" she replied actually sounding sad.

"Claire, we are going to have to make a move, we will go slow though okay?" I said to her leaving out the details of how far we actually had to go.

"Okay, and Steveâ€¦ Thank you" she said, looking straight into my visor.

I nodded and we both set off, picking up everything from the pod and leaving it to rust on its own in wherever this was.

It was going to be a long long journey just too reach anyone who was on our side, hopefully they wouldn't all be dead by the time we got there, I'd decided that following the gorge with the river in was the best bet, and probably the quickest, hopefully the surface along the side here would mainly be rock rather than the dense forest, jungle floor.

As we walked along, creatures called out in the trees beyond, things rustled, and the tree's swayed high above, though if there was a breeze it certainly wasn't reaching us down here, Claire was bathed in sweat, and to be honest even my climate control in the suit was struggling to cope.

My suit had a water supply built in which would refill as it filtered moisture out of the air around me and purified it before filling the



litre tank my suit held, although you didn't notice the weight as for some reason the suit was designed for this, so I had given my water bottles to Claire, if needs be I could empty the water from my suit to refill the bottles, it was quite handy in situations like this to have a supply of water. Wonders of the UNSC and ONI I thought to myself.

We picked our way over fallen dead trees covered in foliage, each time I'd hop over first and then help Claire over. It was clear though after that fallen tree, from what I could see in front along the edge of this gorge, well except the dense forest jungle stuff. Claire was pressing on like a trooper, every now and again I would turn around and check what was behind us, incase any wild animals thought they could chance their luck on an easy meal.

It was when I did this that I would fall behind Claire a little, and each time I couldn't help notice her rear, she wasn't the slimest girls really, she had a little bit to her, but to me that was attractive, something to grab hold of if you know what I mean, but she wasn't fat or overweight by any means, and if she was any skinnier or bigger she wouldn't be as pretty as she is. She did look good though in that tight white tank top and black tight combats with boots on, I must've been bamboozled because she actually had longish hair not short hair like I had described before, maybe she had it styled for work differently to how she normally would have it.

I caught up with her, matching her pace and walking alongside her with gun casually gripped in my hands. I walked on looking at the ground, just side by side with her, if this was a holiday and the war wasn't happening it would be quite romantic but with everything on our minds, it was far from romantic, but it sure was nice to have some female company other than Chrystal and my sister.

Luckily for us daylight never ended here, due to the weird nature of this planet, in a way that was a great thing but in the way of our body clocks it was a complete mind fuck.

We had covered 10 miles in the time we had been walking, I'd lost track though of how long we had been walking, we had a long way to go yet.

"Steve, what's that over there?" Claire said pointing at something.

I looked in the general direction and noticed it to, there was like an old outpost tower or something out here, we decided we would go and have a look to see what it was.

We advanced and walked through a bit of foliage towards the tower like structure, it hadn't been used in a while that's for sure, vines and flora covered it, but you could still see the faint white paint with UNSC:ONI branded across it. It was actually a guard tower on the corner of a structure that must have been a jungle outpost at one point.

I noticed the entry gates, they were closed but one had a hole in, they were only made of weak material in fairness, and it had long since rotted.

"Wait here while I check it out, wait just there" I said directing

her to crouch down in next to the gate without a hole in.

As she moved over there I clambered through the hole, scanning the old forecourt, it was heavily overgrown, but some of the metal platform were still visible, it was a big rectangular court, with a big building directly in front of me, with all its blast protectors down and all its doors closed, around this were the 4 walls of the fortress type place, with a guard tower on each corner.

There was a landing pad to the right aswell that looked as though it was designed to go underground, perhaps a lift type thing that would allow the craft to be lowered into the repair bay below.

"Okay come on in" I shouted back to Claire seeing as it was clear.

She jumped through, and joined me in the middle of the courtyard, we headed for the main building, might aswell check it out as we are here, maybe we could use a transmitter and get an evac pelican to find us.

Approaching the doors, it was obvious the place was locked down, I decided to plug Chrystal into the console next to the door and see if she could work her magic and get us inside.

After a few minutes there was a huge buzzing sound, and the chug of generators, the place still had power! Heck good times.

The main door to the building began to open so I grabbed Chrystal out of the console and plugged her back into my helmet.

As the door opened the lights inside flickered for a bit then came on, it was like a reception room in a hospital, though weirdly clean but the air stagnant, though the air control would soon filter it about and sort it out, it was dusty and unused, looked like it had been centuries since this place last saw anyone inside it.

As we looked around this first room, the main door closed behind us.

"Chrystal, what is this place?" I asked.

"Not entirely sure Steve, I thought we had all base records on our systems, but bases older than 50 years old that are out of use are generally wiped from the system, so it could well be an early outpost that was setup here on this planet" Chrystal informed me.

"See if you can dig up any reference to this place in any records, I find it weird how this place has been left so tidy and still with power" I asked.

"Will do" she replied.

"Right lets try and find the vehicle bay shall we?" I said to Claire.

"Yeah lets" she replied

**\*\*TO BE CONTINUED\*\***

## 9. Chapter 9: Continued: New Place

**\*\*Chapter 9: Continued: New Place, Not So New Surroundingsâ€|\*\***

I walked over to one of the doors and pressed the button on it, it opened with ease. Ahead of us a long corridor the marble floor still shiny, though with a layer of dust on top of it. Walking down this, on either side were offices for various personnel or former personnel, on one of the doors there was still a name tag "General Richard Mickelson".

"Chrystal, you see that name, do a search see what comes up" I ordered of her.

"Lets go in for a moment see what we can find in here" I said to Claire.

Opening the door, we could see the office, there was a window though the blast shield was down so it couldn't be seen out of, to the left at the furthest part of the room a huge book shelf ran along the wall filled with old texts, in front of this a big leather chair and a desk.

On the desk the General's name plate remained, and a lamp was now also on, there was still a cup sitting on a place mat on the table and also a picture of a young girl, possibly a daughter of his? Or maybe even a picture of his wife it could be that long ago since anyone was here. To the right just in the door a leather sofa was placed along the wall, and a long since dead plant in a plant pot next to it.

"Doesn't seem like anyone's home, but isn't it weird how the place is so tidy and yet, there are still personal items left sitting on desks and cups not washed up?" Claire asked.

I nodded in agreement, to be fair, I was thinking something definitely wasn't right, who randomly ups and leaves a base, more to the point why was it even here in the middle of a jungle? Hopefully the answer to that would be pleasing but I doubt it would be.

We started looking through paper work and stuff in the office, there were various names but nothing of any relevance, and nothing with a date on it either which would of helped, maybe one of the other offices or notice boards would be dated.

Walking back out the room and into the corridor we decided we would just take a rest in the reception area directly opposite.

"Steve, General Richard Mickelson, became a general 75 years ago, and was posted to the Las Guangas base, this place, to specialise in training Jungle troops. Seems the program was shut down about 4 years after that and then the base was used as a storage facility for ammunition for 3 years after that before being closed down, pending a review for further use. Though it seems that never happened and the bas has been empty for the last 67 or 66 years." Chrystal informed us.

"So you mean to say no one knows this place even exists now?" I asked.

"Not entirely, there is a squad of the former jungle troops that trained here still in operation today, mainly thanks to lengthy stays in chryo, but still they probably remember this place, the General passed away according to records 29 years ago, was ambushed with his squad by the planets terrorist organisation and murdered in public. No terrorists now though the faction was killed off just after that." Chrystal again informed us.

"I see, so where are these Jungle troops posted?" I asked hoping they would be nearby.

"According to the active battle logs as of now, they are stationed on Earth." Chrystal replied.

"Okay well looks like we are on our own then, is there any vehicles still in the base?" I asked again.

"Yes but whether they work is another matter, there is a couple of Wharthogs, but only the early pre-military spec ones, that have a few modifications like a gun dumped on the back" Chrystal informed us.

"Well might aswell check it out" I said getting up from the seat id taken in the reception room.

Heading out the room, we walked down the corridor a little further until we came to the lift, its doors opened and we stepped inside pressing the button for the vehicle bay, the doors shutting as I did so and the lift began moving down.

It was a brief journey as the lift soon stopped and the doors opened, stepping out we looked around, we were in a brightly lit bay of Vehicles, Chrystal was right there were a couple of very basic Wharthogs parked up across from us, there was also a tank that looked completely busted and unusable, shame wouldn't of minded some heavy artillery.

We walked over to the, and I jumped inside of one, it was all cobwebbed and dusty and just generally messy, I tried to start it, there was a whir but nothing, I tried again and there was just a horrid grinding noise as the engine was probably seized from decades of not being used.

"Well that ones out, lets try the other one" I said hopping back out "Here carry this"

I passed Claire the Silenced SMG I had on my back, it made it awkward sitting in the cars.

I hopped into another one as she slung it across her back, pressing the ignition button it whirred much like the other one but spluttered a bit and eventually started. Though the fuel gauge showed almost empty.

"Is there a refuelling rig in here?" I asked, me and Claire both looking around.

"Yeah over there" Claire said pointing.

I pushed my foot down a little on the pedal, not wanting to kill the beast before it had got going, it began to gently ease forwards though hopped a little I assumed this was due to lack of use as well, but it got over to the fuel rig alright.

I jumped out and whacked in the hose, and began filling the tank, I don't know what miles to the gallon were like in a god knows how old Wharthog but it should get us pretty close to the city we were headed for, if we could find the road that must have been built to get here.

The machine clicked off, signalling a full tank, I removed the hose and sat it back in its position before jumping back in the mucky Wharthog. Claire jumped into the passengers seat alongside me and with that the bay doors opened at the top of a ramp which was obviously the way back out.

I revved the engine a little, it chugged a bit and coughed a little but it didn't die so I eased the girl up the hill and out into daylight. I thought that maybe we were risking it a little using this as it could even blow up on us, but I had faith in the old girl.

Pulling out into the courtyard we drove towards the gates we had picked our way through to get in, I gently rammed them open with the car and exited the base.

"Chrystal, scan the area ahead and give us a basic feed of where the road is and goes on my visor please" I ordered nicely.

In an instant, the road or what she assumed to be the road flashed up on my visors hud making life a hell of a lot easier.

We started moving and got on with it, not going too fast though because otherwise we might end up in a tree or something.

We sat in silence for most of the journey we had covered well over 70 or so miles in the last hour and a bit, picking our way around broken tree's and the like. The car was running smoothly now, all heated up properly, which was a relief, fuel was going down but it was only just under half way so we had plenty left yet.

"Claire" I said "We never did get to go on that date"

She looked at me and smiled, "Well we shall class the you grabbing me and putting me in a pod as date one, and this is our romantic stroll through a forest, well jungle, so date 2 this is"

I gave her a glance, I wasn't sure if she was being serious or not, it looked as though she was.

"That's fine by me but we haven't eaten yet, maybe we should grab dinner sometime?" I said slowing the car to a stop.

"Yeah maybe we should" she replied still smiling.

I jumped out the car, grabbing my battle rifle as I did so.

"Wait here hun" I said jogging off into the trees.

I'd spotted a wild pig or boar, these things are perfect for roasting on an open fire. I had never hunted a wild animal before but hey first time for everything.

I looked at it through the scope of my rifle turning on the laser dot so I could see if I was on target, I immediately lined up the creatures head and pulling the trigger in swift fashion blasting its head apart.

I ran over to it, slinging my gun on my back and grabbing its legs and dragging it back to the wharthog, this would be our meal I thought, also thinking of the rations we had with us. Could well be a nice meal I thought to myself.

Dragging the pig thing back to the Wharthog, I got the weirdest look from Claire as if she couldn't believe what I had just done. I had a smile under my helmet, not that she could see it obviously. I grabbed a few rocks and made a circle, chucking bits of wood in the middle, once I'd got enough this would be the fire.

I grabbed two branches and rammed them in the ground either side of the fire circle, then grabbed a metal rod out the back of the wharthog, this, I shoved through the pig from the mouth all the way through and out its rear. I then balanced it on the two branches either side, it was surprisingly sturdy. With this I fired up a flare and buried it under the wood, soon enough the wood took to the flame and the roast was on.

As time ticked away, me and Claire sat for hours talking about our past, and where had once hoped to be before we all got roped into the war, it was great, must've been the first proper chat I had had with a female in years. We continued to chat and laugh as we ate my expertly cooked wild pig, which was surprisingly amazing to eat.

Time seemed like it was on fast forward we were having such a good chat and everything, but it was time we had got on our way again, the sooner we could meet up other people from our side the better and safer we would both be.

Hopping back into the Wharthog after putting out the fire, we started to make a move, both feeling a little more relaxed, it'd be a long drive before we would be near the city so I told Claire to get some rest, my rest would have to wait.

**\*\*4 hours laterâ€¦\*\***

Driving along in silence on the now clearer remains of the old road that led to the old base, I couldn't help but have the odd glance at Claire, she was sound asleep. Up ahead though I could see the forest thinning and there was now a clear patch of daylight ahead, we were about to exit the forest. I began to slow, I thought it best to check the exit of the forest before we came bombing out into god knows what.

"Claire hun, wake up, we are at the forests edge" I said to her rocking her.

She slowly awoke from her sleep.

"huh?" she mumbled, groggily eyed.

"We are the edge of the forest, come with me, we are gonna go check out the exit of the forest, the city should be right in front of us when we get there" I said jumping out of the vehicle.

She nodded and clambered out aswell and we both began to walk to the very edge of the forest, I had turned all safety off on my battle rifle, expecting anything frankly.

Walking out of that forest was the biggest shock we would both ever get. Instead of seeing a nice flat route to the city, we were at the top of a cliff face with the road winding back and forth until it got to the bottom. Would have been quite a view except for what was happening ahead.

The City was devastated and only parts of it remained in tact, the once abundant skyscrapers were now flat on the ground, listing awkwardly or were just rubble on the ground. The smaller buildings around were either wiped from the face of existence, smouldering heaps or were just craters in the ground.

Looking out from the lush green forest, to the darkened sky, with smoke which bellowed from huge fires that were blazing in the city, was a horrid feeling, we had gone from untouched existence to one that was being carved apart by the Covvie bastards who were intent on cleansing us from this universe.

Pelicans flew in and out of the city either dropping off more troops or taking casualties away, a few Falcon attack ships were strafing the enemy positions, but were getting shot down just as quick.

We were fighting a battle that we were definatly going to to lose.

"What are we going to do?" Claire asked me.

"Fight." I replied "Fight for all we are worth, for everything that means anything to us, for our friends, for our family, for ourselves, most importantly for the survival of our kind."

My words must of meant something, as Claire gave me a steely look I hadn't seen before, as if she meant business and was about to kick someones ass, I just hoped it wasn't mine.

We ran back to the Wharthog and jumped on in, I wasn't about to spend hours winding down a mountain road. No. I was gonna take the easy route down and hope we didn't die in the process. It had been done before successfully, so heck fuck it here we go.

I floored the pedal and we rocketed away with wheel spin, we were both buckled in, my hands clenched on the steering wheel. We were heading straight for the cliffs edge.

We flew off the edge, and bounced down the side, then across the level road bit, we would be doing this all the way down, we thumped and thudded down the side all the time keeping my foot flat on the pedal. I somehow managed to keep the thing in a straight line, seemed my reflexes had also been increased from the operations.

One last thump and we were at the bottom, the car amazingly seeming fine, I gunned it towards the city. We were now cutting across a barren flat landscape that seemed to surround the city, it was dusty and just plain dry dirt.

It seemed however there was a small Covenant outpost between us and the city, though it seemed to be being utilised as a drop off point for more troops of theirs. Well fuck that those bastards can take that and shove it up their arse. I aimed for them in the car, a few explosive power cores were in the middle of the makeshift drop off point.

Whilst still driving I whipped out my pistol didn't even aim just instinctively pulled the trigger once, the bullet flew into the power core and completely destroyed the base in one huge purple and blue explosion.

On the way past the last of it a Grunt staggered out, thinking it had survived, only to turn just as we hit it. Its last look of life would have been the front of a Wharhog crushing into its own face.

The city was rushing up quickly, well what was left of it, we would be entering the suburbs of it first however before we would get anywhere near the centre.

I noticed a group of Marines flagging us down, so I began to slow and stopped next to them. They had been taking cover in a cluster of rocks, it would seem attempting to get to the drop point that I had just destroyed.

"Soldiers" I said with a nod. They all saluted seeing my rank.

"Sir, nice work back there, they had us pinned down for hours, we thought that was it!" the groups leader said to me.

"No worries soldiers, you were doing a fine job of holding out" I blagged not knowing what they had actually done.

"Thank you sir, mind if we hop on the back and get a lift back to the city?" he asked.

"Sure, hop on, u might have to sort of stand but get in men" I directed motioning them to jump on the back.

All 5 of them managed to get into the back around the gun, it looked awkward but I was glad for more firepower to be with us at last. One guy jumped on the mounted gun, which was good, I wasn't sure if It actually worked but im sure we would find out sooner or later.

We all sat in silence, me focused on the city ahead along with Claire, whilst the men on the back kept scanning around us and the air above us, just incase.

With no sign of a road that would get us into the suburbs, I drove clean through the fence of someones rear garden and cut through to the road in front of the house.

There were cars and bikes and all kinds of stuff littering the road, so I began to pick through it, swerving everything as best as I could clipping the odd the car here and there. It would continue like this



for the next half hour until we got out of the housing area and onto a freeway.

Cruising along the freeway which was much clearer compared to the compact streets in the suburbs I decided to see just where the soldiers were destined.

"Guys where are you headed?" I asked them

"Well, we don't know, the command base we had set up got destroyed whilst we were trying to get to that drop off point, hence why everyone fighting here in the city is in disarray, no one knows what they are doing" the leader of the group replied.

"Okay stick with me then, lets get some sort of command going and get everyone the hell out of here, whats the civvie's evac looking like at the moment?" I asked whilst swerving an abandoned van.

"All the Civvie's are out, we were just trying to push the Covvie's back and were doing a good job of it when the command base got destroyed by a fleet of banshee's, which were destroyed themselves just afterwards" he replied.

"Okay, right lets find a suitable location, we will have to set up an evac point, soldiers are dieing out here for no good reason, oh and lets give the Covvie's hell until we are gone!" I shouted back to them.

"OORAH!" they all chimed.

We were now near the City centre and we decided now would be a good time to leave the vehicle and set up shop in one of the City Halls, this would be our main evac point I had decided.

It was already sandbagged and had a few defences setup around it so it seemed adequate for the time being.

The group of 5 marines setup shop in defensive positions around it, whilst I got Chrystal to send out a signal on all UNSC frequencies, informing troops to fall back to this location.

Whilst she did that I got onto Comms with any ships above the planet to get evac flights organised.

"Command, do you read? This is ODST Staff Sergeant Hill, requesting immediate evac flights for all ground troops over" I spoke out.

"This is Command, we read you Staff Sergeant, Evac flights have been commissioned, and are en route to your co-ordinates." The tech guy transmitted.

"Roger that, requesting permission to be last out, I want to make sure we have saved all we can before the last Pelican leaves, over" I requested.

"Permission granted Staff Sergeant, Over and out" the guy cut the transmission.

"Right guys, Evac is now in operation, I expect you to keep them

covered when they arrive, you can leave as soon as the rest are clear!" I shouted out to them as I walked over to Claire.

"Roger that Sir!" they all chimed.

They each had a mounted Machine gun to use, so the cover would be pretty intense for anything that tried to cause havoc with our operations now, one of them was even a Gauss cannon.

"Claire, you will be on the first Pelican out, okay?" I said walking up to her.

"But what about you? When are you getting out?" she asked sounding quite upset.

"I'll be fine, and I will be there eventually, I've just got to make sure all the men here get out alive" I said trying to sound as positive as possible.

"And what if you don't? what if them alien things attack and destroy the last Pelican, then what? What do I do? I need you!" she said even more upset.

I hadn't expected that, but it was a welcome feeling of being wanted.

"I will make it out I promise you, those bastards aren't going to take me anytime soon I can assure you of that, if anything its them who should be worried about making it out alive." I said pulling Claire in and hugging her.

She cried a little, but as she did so the first Pelican arrived above us setting down in a square that had been marked out on the main road.

She looked up at me and took my helmet off, and without so much as a word leant in and kissed me for what seemed like a lifetime, before she finally pulled back.

"Please keep your promise" she said as she turned and jumped into the Pelican.

I nodded at her, and gave her a wave whilst putting on my helmet again. I had a reason to fight now, more than ever, the Covvie bastards wouldn't know what had hit them.

As I turned around a group of wounded Marines were headed for the Pelican.

"Sir, Private McGregor, thanks for the signal, we have a huge ground force of Covenant 5 klicks to the north, they have given us hell, without the signal to leave we would probably be dead by now, thanks" the Private said before jumping into the Pelican.

The Pelican powered off, as it did so another one landed, Marines and various other UNSC infantry were now flooding into the location, and the Pelicans were coming and going thick and fast.

I stood guard of the main landing area just incase any smart arse Covvie thought he could get one over on us.

"Staff Sergeant Hill, Come in, this is Command, over" the tech guy spoke out.

"Staff Sergeant Hill, reading you over" I replied.

"We need you to locate a downed Pelican, various high ranking personnel on board, this is a high priority mission, over" they again said.

"Roger that, send me the Co-Ordinates and I will investigate, over" I replied.

"Roger that patching through the co-ordinates now" they replied.

Within a few moments they flashed up on my HUD, and I set off at a fast pace, would take me at least 40 minutes to reach the crash site, which was on the cusp of the Covenant advancement.

This was going to be a race against time.

## 10. Chapter 10: Saving A Higher Command

**\*\*Chapter 10: Saving a higher command.\*\***

As I ran onwards to the co-ordinates, I had spoken to the 5 marines back at the evac point to assume control of getting everyone out, I had also asked them to try and hold out for me to return. Whether or not that would happen I didn't yet know but I sure as hell was going to make sure of it.

The city I was running through now, was just a mess of rubble and debris, I couldn't believe it. This place used to be people's homes and lives and now it was just another soon to be abandoned place on a planet because of these alien bastards.

"Chrystal, are you able to get your scanners on the downed pelican?" I asked whilst running still.

"Will do my best Steve" she replied.

I left her to it, she would let me know soon enough if she was able to or not. My main concern was coming across any Covvie patrols whilst on my own. I was doing my best to stay running whilst also staying along the remains of shop fronts and other buildings that remained, but more often than not I had to go into the middle of the road to get through some parts.

There was gunfire up ahead, I wasn't sure what lay ahead but it was definitely human weapons firing. I clicked safety off on my gun and carried on running towards the fight as it was the only way to the downed Pelican.

Rounding a few burnt out cars I saw 3 marines firing out upon a small Covvie group, only a few jackals but still causing a problem for them. I stopped in my tracks and took aim, I blasted one of the Jackals arms that wasn't protected by its shield, which made it reveal itself with that I planted 2 shots in the chest and 1 in its

face which downed it. With that I moved forward a bit lobbing a frag grenade at the same time towards the other 2, it bounced off one of their shields but as it did so it exploded sending them both to oblivion.

"Thanks Sir!" one of the marines shouted to me.

"No problem, get yourselves back to the evac point, there's pelicans there to get you guys out" I instructed.

"Roger that sir, thanks again" the marine said again before they all moved and sprinted off the way I had come from.

Well at least I knew there was now Covvies in the area so my guard was even more up. I checked my scanners, no more Covvies but still a while yet til I reach the crash site.

**\*\*20 minutes later\*\***

Well, I was just 400 meters away from the crash site, I could see smoke from the site drifting up into the air just beyond a set of buildings in front of me. It didn't look promising seeing the smoke rising but there was vague chatters of gunfire ringing out.

"Chrystal, can you raise them?" I asked moving towards a building that I would have to go through to get to the site.

"Negative, no comms available, if there are they are restricted" she informed me.

"Okay well see if you can find a way to communicate with them" I instructed her.

I made my way into the building in front, smashing the glass in the locked front door and stepping inside. The place was covered in dust, but that wasn't any of my concern, I needed to get through and out the back.

Picking my way over shelves which had fallen over from nearby blasts that had shook the place violently I heard a scuffle in a room to the right. My first reaction was to turn and throw a flashbang straight into the room where I had heard the noise.

BOOM, FLASH.

I dived into the room, but abruptly pulled my gun up. Holy shit I thought to myself.

Cowering in the corner was someone's dog that they had left here, a greyhound by the looks of things. I had scared the living shit out of it and it was whimpering too, I felt guilty but hey how was I to know.

I enticed the little fella over and with that it stopped whimpering.

"Nice to see you have made a friend Steve" Chrystal chimed in.

"Hey come on, I do actually have friends, you included" I

replied.

"Well, maybe, we shall see, what shall we do with him?" Chrystal replied back.

"Well I don't want to leave him, we will take him I guess" I said.

With that I untied the dog from where it had been left by its former owner and turned back out the room the dog in tow. This complicated things but hey we could make this work.

I tied the dog again at the rear of the shop, and turned to the door, it was unlocked so gun at the ready I slowly opened the door gun pointing through the gap.

There it was, the pelican, smashed and bits of it on fire in the middle of what used to be a big fountain in the middle of a square like area.

Looking across I could pick out a body of a Ranger laying awkwardly across some rubble, motionless, he was dead no doubt about that.

"Chrystal, any life signs?" I asked

"Yes 5 so far but no identity tags" she replied hastily.

I looked around again and made a move out the door, swiftly ducking down behind a few concrete benches. Peeking over I couldn't see any signs of movement, so I made a run for it. As I did so plasma fire rained down just in front of me, not normal plasma though, sniper plasma.

"Shit!" I cursed out whilst diving to the side, constantly changing direction avoiding the shots raining down around me. I Jumped forwards, crumpling in a heap in the cover of the downed Pelican.

Out of view of the Covvie sniper now, I banged 3 times on the hull of the ship and called out to anyone inside to bang 3 times back. Sure enough 3 bangs came back loud and clear.

I skirted round some rubble to the side hatch, it was smashed and bent, that was not going to open.

"Steve, the rear hatch is also jammed shut, it seems the crash jammed a lot of the mechanisms" She informed me.

"Damn it, okay right well we need a plan, I have some controlled explosives, maybe blowing the side hatch hinges will work" I said, just merely forming the idea out of nowhere.

"Worth a go" Chrystal said.

With that, I planted some, then gave 3 bangs and shouted through to move away from the side hatch and to bang 3 times when they were clear. In no more than 2 minutes 3 bangs rang out. With that I hid behind some rubble and detonated the charge.

KABOOM. The sound ringing out across the square, a bit louder than I had intended but hey if it gets them out then it is all good.

I looked up as the dust settled, the hatch had been blown clean open.

I scrambled forwards still keeping low because of that sniper. I crouched down and squeezed into the pelican, the lights inside still worked thankfully, so looking around I spotted the crew at the rear of the ship.

"Thank god! We are saved!" the pilot exclaimed.

"Not yet sunshine, we got to get you out of here yet!" I replied  
"Okay who have I got here? Intel was shite and scanners didn't identify you, so names please"

Stepping forwards was a big guy, dark skin, and grey short hair.

"Admiral T'Bouge" he stated bluntly, looking me up and down "So is this all we have to escort us out of this mess?"

"Afraid so, I took control and elected to evac all ground forces" I replied.

"Evac? Why would you do such a thing? We have a planet to save!" he replied sounding rather pissed off.

"Sorry no can do, the planets a lost cause sir, so with all due respect lets get the hell out of here" I replied equally pissed off.

"NO!" he shouted back.

"Alright sit the hell down and shut the bloody hell up" a familiar voice said.

I looked past the Admiral, to my utter amazement, there stood Kez and Kelly.

"Kez? Kelly?" I questioned.

"Steve!?" they both exclaimed and questioned.

"Jesus it's good to see you guys, right anyway here's the situation, there is a sniper on the far side to the west, enemy patrols are nearing the location too. Problem is, I can't get a sight on that little shit on the west, so it's a run across to the shop with the blue rear door okay? I will lay down cover fire just get yourselves to the shop" I instructed, whilst ducking back out the pelican.

The guys inside clambered out, and crouched down, 2 pilots, the admiral and Kez and Kelly.

"Right on my mark run for it" I said scanning the west buildings for the sniper.

A target flashed up on my helmets hud, Chrystal had marked out the location of an unidentified target. It was the sniper, but I didn't

have a clean shot.

I aimed though and released a few bursts and I saw him duck down, with that the guys ran across the street and into the shop I had come from originally.

At the shop Kez leaned out and fired on the same location covering me across for my run. A shot whistled past my head, the sniper had taken a pot shot and luckily missed.

I got inside and Kez came in and slammed the door shut.

"Command, this is ODST Staff Sergeant Hill, I need a pelican evac, I have the package and need immediate extraction over." I boomed across the radio.

"This is command, please reach the following co-ordinates, a pelican will be waiting along with 5 marines, all ground forces are evacuated, you are the last collection" The techy guy informed.

"Okay ladies and gents, grab the dog let's move!" I instructed.

There was no time for friendly chatter that could wait until we were off this damn fucking planet.

We made good progress; Kelly had the dog, which I had given the name of Sniper because of what happened after finding him. 4 minutes now until we reached the pelican evac.

"Staff Sergeant, this is Command, do you read?" they chimed in.

"I read you, go ahead," I replied still running.

"We are transferring you back to the UNSC Gorgon, all other ships have now left the sector, advise you get on board double time, Covenant forces inbound" they informed me.

Damn it, that's all we need, more of the fuckers coming down on us like a shit brick house. We began moving quicker and sure enough up ahead was a pelican, around the opening ramp on the rear was the 5 marines I had left earlier, locked and loaded ready to cover us.

Truth be told we didn't need covering this time around but hey the thought was nice. We all jumped on and the pilot gunned it. So fierce was the acceleration that I almost fell over, just managing to grab hold of a railing to steady myself.

No one spoke a word, all exhausted and just wanting to get the hell out of here. I couldn't blame them.

Sitting there though, my thoughts returned to Claire, I hoped she was okay, I don't know what ship she was on, but we were all headed for the Alpha 4 quadrant so I would meet up soon enough hopefully.

"Docking in 5" the pilot stated over comms.

At last a bit of rest I thought. Sure as hell I would be wrong again I thought though.

With a bump and a grind, we landed, by far one of the worst landings ever, but with the hurry to get out the system before the Covvie's arrived it was no surprise. As soon as we had docked, the UNSC Gorgon had gotten underway again heading for Alpha 4.

Alpha 4 was a quadrant home to some 6 colonial planets, all of which had a heavy human presence, these planets were key, if we lost these in quick succession then god forbid. I knew we wouldn't though, something told me that, I don't quite know what but I knew we would have one of the biggest stands here that the UNSC had ever seen.

Trudging through the decks, my guns slung on my back, I headed for an information panel completely oblivious to Kelly and Kez being around me again.

I sifted through the names of people looking for Claire, sure enough she cropped up, she was aboard the UNSC Gorgon to my surprise. Well this was great, the old team back together and Claire here too, I felt comfortable knowing I wasn't alone now, very comfortable infact.

"Hey shit brains, coming for a drink?" Kez asked cheekily.

"Ah fuck it why not, come on then, but hey no stripping this time" I said chuckling.

Walking to the mess, we slipped back into our old ways, ripping into each other and generally joking enough to take our minds off of the job we had to do, it was nice to actually be able to forget for a while, even if it was just 5 minutes.

As we sat in our jovial mood, smiles across our faces, Claire came into the mess just in the door behind Kez and Kelly whom were both sat in front of me. Seeing her walk in, I zoned out of the conversation with Kez and Kelly, fixated on Claire who was looking around lost before she caught sight of me. It was at this moment, I got up stumbling as I caught the edge of the table to run towards her as she was hurrying to me.

Kez and Kelly were both confused, as they watch me hurridly get up, but all was clear when they saw me whisk Claire up in my arms, both of us lost in the moment oblivious to those around me. I didn't care though for once it wasn't about anyone one else it was about me. As we kissed, a few people began to whistle, whilst others began clapping. It would seem apparent happiness was few and far between here, in the midst of war.

"I promised you I would make it," I whispered to her, my hand placed on the side of her head brushing her hair back, looking into her eyes.

She said nothing back just closing her eyes and resting her head under my chin, I don't recall how long we stood there in each other's arms but it seemed like forever.

Kez and Kelly came up to us, and without saying a word we all walked



out of the mess to a more private area to sit and talk. We found a quiet bar on the ship and set up shop in the corner in some mighty fine leather sofas. Kelly and Kez both getting along amazingly well, which was good, my sister deserved some happiness in her life and so did Kez, meanwhile Claire lay across the sofa, head in my lap half asleep.

We spent ages, sipping drinks which ranged from capuchinno's to general beers and wine. Eventually sleep got the better of us, so we parted ways for the remainder of the night, Kez and Kelly returning to my old room with Kez, me and Claire heading for some temporary quarters we had been given.

They probably thought a night of pure hormone filled passion was gonna happen but how things were different indeed. We lay awake for a while just lying in each other's arms before drifting off to sleep.

We had just woken up, when all hell had broken loose. News had arrived that the planet we had just been on had been glazed, but more worryingly Covenant forces were already sat on the edge of Alpha 4. Not just Covenant, a whole god damn fleet of 36 battle ships and a huge one which we had no name of, as we simply hadn't seen anything like it before.

Alarms were sounding off, squad leaders barked orders at their men and inbetween all this was me forcing my way through the crowds to get to the Bridge of the ship. It had been a mission on its own to get here, the corridors crowded and full of life. Finally I arrived on the Bridge albeit late, the briefing on the situation was well underway, Kelly was rapidly tapping away on consoles to the side of the Bridge and Kez was stood fully clad in battle gear, looked like we were destined for a quick root back to hell.

"Where the hell have you been Staff Sergeant?" The Captain questioned me.

"Sorry sir, it's like a mission on its own to get through the crowds down below," I replied.

"Very well," he said not bothering to argue.

It was at this point a man I hadn't ever seen stepped forwards. He wore a light blue and silver outfit, sort of the same material as the scientists wear in the labs below, but something more meaning to it. On his chest he had a display of medals, for what I don't know but still he had them. He was an aging man that I would easily place in his fifties if not older, his face worn and stubble across his rugged skin.

"Now gentlemen, you have heard what the Captain has had to say, now it's my turn," he said pausing, "You are about to be putting up one of the biggest fights mankind has ever seen, we have a plan, that plan being to destroy the enemy ships but capture the unidentified ship that we have called The Chalice."

"Sir if I may," I spoke out "I have seen these in action, these Covvie's, they are not to be underestimated. Their ships outgunned us when we outnumbered them 3 to 1, they destroyed marine squads with ease on the ground, how on earth do you suppose we are going to

manage this?"

"Hill I presume? Yes I have heard about your impressive displays, but a bit of a loud mouth," he hastily replied, "You should pay attention, this is how we are to do this, we have 5 squads of Spartans being deployed to the enemy ships from there they will assume control of these 5 ships and use them to disable the main one along with fire power from the UNSC fleet."

"With all due respect Sir, this is not going to work!" I exclaimed, "Good men are going to lose their lives for no god damn reason other than for some experimental bullshit that you want to try."

"Staff Sergeant I suggest you shut your mouth before I bust you back to being a Private, you will all do as I say, I am in command!" he bellowed back.

"I will do what is best for the men and women around me, I do not fall under your command I am not of a unit in this fleet, so good luck with that!" I spat out.

At this point he stormed towards me and shoved me back into the wall of the Bridge, by now everyone there staring at what was unfolding.

"Now you listen here you little shit, you think for a few fancy upgrades and a twinkle in your eye because of that girl you have on your arm that you are the big man, well you are not, you signed up to fight, so fight is what you will do. I make the calls, is that clear?" he said leaning into my face.

"I'm afraid I didn't quite catch that, do you want to make it clearer?" I sarcastically replied.

He shoved me again, I let him, I wanted him to feel like he was in charge but once more and he would regret it. He duly did so trying to grab the collar of my shirt with both hands as he did so I smashed my fists into his sides near his armpits, it winded him a little and I saw him wince. In retaliation he lashed out and landed a punch but only on my left shoulder, at which point I grabbed his outstretched arm, and shoved him head first into the wall of the Bridge before chucking him on the floor.

"Just because we signed up to fight doesn't mean we needlessly die at the will of a frail old man, capiche?" I said before a swift kick to the head knocked him out cold.

"Nice!" Kez exclaimed.

"Yeah yeah, Captain, I assume you are now in command?" I asked.

"I assume so, right ladies and gents, lets set up a defensive perimeter of the planets, I want battle clusters here, here and here. Ground forces will be deployed to the main cities with scout squads venturing to the less populated areas, lets get these people off the planet and to safety!" he ordered in quick precise fashion.

"Yes Sir!" the team chimed.

"Staff Sergeant Hill, Staff Sergeant Kezowski, Lieutenant Hill, with

me," he said walking toward the exit of the Bridge.

We followed, god alone knows what the man had planned but at least it was better than that dipshit back there, whom I might add was still out cold on the floor. He could stay there for all I could care, we had bigger fish to fry.

Walking out of the Bridge, we headed for the Observation Deck, where previously we had some mission briefings, it was a bit strange considering but no doubt this was where we would find out we had to recover something at all costs before the Covenant got to it.

"Here we are, what you are seeing here is the Alpha 4 quadrant, these 3 planets located at the top of the system are currently the furthest from any Covenant ships so as of the moment evacuation has already begun. Here these 2 planets, they sit just inside the orbit of those 3, these will play a key tactical role in the Navy versus Covenant ship to ship battles, but that is not what we are here for," The Captain paused a serious look on his face, "This planet, Macobi II, is home to various installations that the UNSC and ONI setup, the data located in these installations all feeds to one power core deep in the heart of this island here."

The 3D projection zoomed into the planet and down to the island specified.

"It is imperative you reach this before the Covenant forces do, the data here is a matter of life and death not just for us but everyone. The research carried out here, affects everything, whilst we are confident it would take them years to decode it and figure out what it is, we simply can't risk it falling into enemy hands," he paused again, "This is where you three come in, I trust you Sergeants with my life and more so Lieutenant Kelly, her coding and quick work on the systems has saved us more times than we can count and right now she is the only one capable of working the systems below, you are to get her to the power core from there she will be able to do her work, move out!"

We hurried out, I grabbed my gear off the tech guy just walking into the room. We had no time to lose, the sooner we got there the sooner we would be back safe and sound. At least, that's what I kept telling myself. I don't know what was meant to be happening with me as for which unit I was meant to be with but right now this was what mattered.

Although I hated the risk of possibly never returning, the buzz and the feeling you get from knowing what you have done has saved lives is unrivalled. So here we go on another quest to save humanity as we know it.

Buckled in, and ready for the off I gave the thumbs up through the window. With that the Pod shook and suddenly dropped, rocketing through its exit hatch on the UNSC Gorgon. This would never get old, the adrenalin rush from being shot through space at god knows what speed. Across from me was two more Pods, one containing Kez the other containing Kelly, who had evidently now been trained to use them and had some level of ground combat training, the combat of which I assumed was basic training for everyone though I could be wrong.

Hurtling through the atmosphere we were destined to land straight on the island that was shown on the 3D display. We should land somewhere near the beach and from there we would have to battle through to the inner island to gain access to the entry point, from there we faced a long journey down, 5 separate decks would have to be negotiated, with no elevator that would go straight down because of security. That meant that each deck would have to be negotiated before finally reaching the elevator that would take us to the power core.

BOOM. THUD. The shuttle smashed into the softer sand of the beach, the hatch hissed as I hit the door release and the pressure adjusted. Across from me no more than 20 meters away Kez had landed, with Kelly 5 meters the other side of his pod. For now we were safe there was no hurry, the Covenant forces hadn't hit yet, for some reason still orbiting.

After grabbing my gear I moved on over to Kez and Kelly who had formed up on the grassy land just off the sandy beach, it was a weird terrain, with the sandy beach it literally turned into a grassy surface with mud underneath a dramatic change indeed.

"Alright, all able and walking?" I asked walking to them.

"Yeah all good, first time you've asked that, not going soft in your old age are you?" Kez replied.

"Not at all, so shall we?" I said motioning to move on toward the main island.

They took the hint and we started walking toward the inner island.

Walking more away from the shore, the terrain became more jungle like, though not dense it certainly had the same sort of humidity and plant life. I had told the other two to turn their safety switches off on their weapons, not that Kez had a safety, he had modified his shotgun and got rid of it completely.

We walked in slightly spaced out, me in the center, Kelly to my right and Kez to my left keeping a watchful eye on what lurked up above and to the sides. I meanwhile kept a firm eye ahead occasionally turning around to make sure we weren't being followed.

"Chrystal, can you give us all some markers as to where we are heading, I have a feeling we might well get lost out here," I asked her.

"Sure, I'll get on it," she swiftly replied.

Walking on now further in the depths of this jungle like island, there were the squeals and squawks of the native wild life, all calling out no doubt warning each other of our presence, a typically natural thing to happen.

"So Steve, it really is bugging me, what did he mean by a few upgrades?" Kelly asked suddenly.

"Huh?" I replied baffled.

"The guy on the bridge, he said to you about something to do with

upgrades, what did he mean?" Kelly asked again.

"I don't know," I lied.

"Steve, you aren't fooling me, I'm your sister, so bloody well tell me!" she demanded.

"Gah, alright, okay so I'm not meant to say, it is classified, if I say then I don't get the things I need to stay as I am, but since we are here in the unknown here's the deal. I got upgraded, as it were, to just below Spartan level, my limbs aren't my limbs as such, I have robotic upgrades imbedded. I guess you could say I am part cyborg so technically a Spartan, but yeah that is the long and short." I explained avoiding the details about how long it had taken and how painful it was.

"Bullshit!" Kez exclaimed.

"Kez I wouldn't bullshit to you or my sister." I sharply replied.

"Steve, that is, well I don't know what it is but either way that makes you key to everything here, but surely with those upgrades, you will outlive us because don't they change your genetic structure and extend everything's life?" Kelly again asked.

"Afraid so yeah, looks like im in this for the long haul huh?" I replied.

"Alright, I have a confession as well." Kez randomly spouted.

"What?" I asked looking him up and down.

"I may of undergone certain things as well, but no where near yours." Kez said.

"Well glad to know I'm not alone," I replied giving him a nod.

"Wait, you didn't tell me this! What the hell?" Kelly angrily spat out.

From there the two began to have a mini domestic but in the end they both agreed it was pointless as it affected nothing, which they did give me a bit too much info on what it didn't affect, but hey at least the squabbling had stopped.

The place was a lush tropic kind of place to be, it was humid outside of my suit but the mega climate control built into it kept things just right. Kez had a similar suit though not quite as advanced as mine, whilst Kelly was just clad in pretty much normal armour the army used, so she was looking a little hot without the climate control we had.

It was turning out to be a longer walk than expect and we were now in a sort of valley or gorge, with a sheer cliff face on either side of us but we could barely see that for the jungle like plants and trees towering over us. It was light down here surprisingly the suns rays penetrating through the canopy above where ever it could, this was a

big help because without that it would be pretty dark down here.

"Okay guys the entrance should be around here somewhere," I informed them as we came to a stop, looking around for any signs of a UNSC or ONI construct.

"I'm not seeing anything dude," Kez replied spinning around in a circle looking about the place.

"Me neither," Kelly agreed.

"Okay, Chrystal, can you give us a scan report and locate the entrance we are sort of stumped here," I asked her.

"Well I'm glad you asked, just finished a scan and the entrance is behind those tree's to the right according to what I have," Chrystal informed me.

"Cheers, okay guys entrance this way," I stated, now walking toward the trees Chrystal had directed me to.

Sure enough behind the trees was the entrance hatch, over grown and covered in moss and dirt. It had evidently not been used much in recent times, though that said this didn't look like the main entrance, probably a backup hatch should anything be going down, which in this case it was.

"Kez give me a hand, Kelly keep guard," I instructed.

Kez came over and a few heaves the door still wouldn't budge. There wasn't any key pad or anything either it was purely a manual door, maybe the hinges had jammed or the lock mechanism had, either way this door was jammed.

"Chrystal is there anything you can do?" I asked her.

"Afraid not, this door was designed with a fail safe in place which means no AI can tamper with it," She stated sounding rather disappointed she couldn't help.

"Okay brute force it is, Kez use that handy shotgun of yours and blow the hinges, we'll lift the damn thing right out!" I ordered.

Kez duly made us stand back for fear of ricochet rounds, and fired on the locks a few times. Sure enough they were blown off and now all we had to do was see if we could pull the damn thing out.

A few heaves and we got the thing to start moving, holding it in place Kez quickly got behind it and give it a push from behind, with this though I had to dive out the way as it came over quickly almost crushing me.

"Sorry dude," Kez said peering down at me now sprawled on the ground.

"You will be," I chuckled "now come on lets get inside."

The removal of the hatch door revealed a deep shaft with a ladder down to a platform, it was a grill mesh platform so you could see

beyond down into the deep shaft. So deep infact you couldn't see the bottom from where we were so inevitable death was there looming if you misjudged or slipped off the ladder and missed the platform.

"Guys you can't be serious, we have to climb that tiny ladder above that? No way!" Kelly exclaimed.

"Kelly, it's simple you use your hands and feet in co-ordination and climb down." I cheekily replied.

"You are a sod, look I know how to use a ladder okay?" Kelly replied.

"So what's the big deal about this one?" I retorted.

"Have you seen what this one is above!?" she cried, staring down the hatch again.

"Well while you two girls keep bitching about what the big deal is, I will see you down there," Kez chimed in climbing down onto the ladder.

As he did so he slipped on purpose and fained a cry for help and then went on to pretend he just couldn't go on. Kelly batted him on the helmet with her rifle and he chuckled and started moving on down the ladder.

"Well, ladies first," I gestured to Kelly, motioning toward the hatch.

With a sigh and knowing she had no choice she climbed down onto the ladder and began to shimmy down.

"Hey nice arse!" Kez suddenly shouted, obviously looking up above him on the ladder.

"Guys please I don't need to hear this," I said as I too climbed onto the ladder and began my descent.

"Oh come on, you're only freaked out because it is your sister I said it to," Kez replied.

"Yes that is exactly why, that's like you are saying if I went to your mum and said hey nice tits wanna bone? That you would be okay with it," I replied.

"Well now you put it like that, I see your point," Kez replied conceding defeat.

"Er hello you two, I am still here," Kelly said hearing us bantering on.

"We know!" we both exclaimed at the same time.

Kez was down and onto the platform, the ladder finished above the platform so you had to sort of drop down onto it, which again Kelly wasn't keen on. She was there at the end of the ladder hesitating when I got fed up and shoved her head down with my boot.

She squealed but was soon on the platform dusting herself down as girls do.

"Bastard, god sometimes I hate you!" she angrily said.

"I know, the feeling is mutual," I said beaming a grin inside my helmet as I jumped down and joined them on the platform.

"So where to now?" Kez asked.

"Right from here we need to get through the hatch door over there, that should bring us out into the security room which is pretty much the lobby as it were, from there we just follow the levels down," I informed them "Also when we are through this hatch, we seal it behind us, we don't want anyone following us in now do we?"

"Or getting out for that matter," Kelly drearily replied, insinuating there was probably a shitstorm about to kick off inside.

She was probably right as I cast my mind back to the mission with Kez and the Spartans, but I could hope at least that that would not be the case here.

"Steve I hate to inform you, but I'm detecting life forms inside, I can't determine what they are though," Chrystal informed me.

"Okay Chrystal thanks, okay guys intel, Chrystal has found life forms inside, unidentified targets as of current, safety switches off be prepared, check your corners," I ordered them as we approached the hatch.

A few seconds passed by and the hatch light went from red to green, a load of clonks and thuds sounded as the locks disabled and then a hiss as it started to open.

"Go go go, check those corners!" I ordered as we dived through into the security room.

A brightly lit room at that, in typical white that ONI used. Silence. Absolute silence.

"Okayâ€¦| so where the hell are those life forms?" Kez questioned puzzled.

"I, I don't understand Steve, they were right here!" Chrystal cried out.

"Okay do a scan, keep that going, inform us of anything around us that is unusual or abnormal," I instructed her.

"Well?" Kez said whilst panning the left side of the room.

"Okay Chrystal is scanning, we don't know where the life forms have gone, stay sharp, I don't want anyone wandering off without my say so, burst fire only and only on targets designated as bogeys," I ordered, "Lets go!"

We advanced through the scanner blocks, which evidently weren't working as nothing bleeped. Beyond those huge things was another sort of lobby where you would pick up your scanned items, then advance



through the double doors in front which was where we were headed.

Bursting through the double doors was another big room, though with one thing at the other end. Stairs. These stairs would lead down to Sub-Level 1, the first floor we would have to completely negotiate before the next set of stairs would allow us down to Sub-Level 2 then 3 and so on until we got to the Core-Index Level, which was just below Sub-Level 5.

The Core-Index Level hosted the site for all the computer cores, hard drives and systems as well as the constructs AI, which for all intents and purposes was a very basic AI that was now disabled.

The place seemed as though it had once been the hustle and bustle of ONI and had once been at the cutting edge of all technology. We had been informed that it was used as recently as 2 years ago, but the station was largely left unmanned and unarmed due to personnel and armed forces being required elsewhere in this war against the Covenant, so therefore ONI had sacrificed its facility for the cause.

Only now there were three of us again inside the facility, rumours were abound or rather intel had said, the Covenant were after the Core-Index Systems, so they could harvest more knowledge about us as a species, which I sure as hell wasn't going to let happen. We had been informed that also the Rebels, whom worshipped the Covenant, were also in pursuit of these devices and systems.

The Rebels were for all intents and purposes extremists. The Covenant to them were gods, it had been speculated on previous planets now glazed that the Rebels had been working with the Covenant, leaking data and information they had stolen in return for being allowed to live albeit under the command of the Covenant. A good deal when the Covenant appeared to hate the human species as a whole, but heck those bastards deserved to die for aiding the enemy intent on wiping out our species.

Walking down the stairs we went down in a triangular formation, two of us at the front flanking the stairs and one of us in tow a bit behind covering our rears, we left that for Kelly as she had far less training and skills in combat. Kez was blitzing down the stairs with his modified shotgun out, whilst I had a brand new close combat SMG and upgrade of my already upgraded SMG, whilst Kelly covered us with a modified version of a battle rifle, with less recoil and a full auto setting, a mega and deadly weapon and a vast improvement on its older sister, it also still possessed the range of the older model aswell.

The stairs were vast and it was a hell of a long way down before we reached Sub-Level 1, the stairs levelling out into a small open space with just a door with the words stating what level it was printed across it in blue font.

"Okay stack up!" I ordered taking the left side of the door.

"Roger that," Kez replied stacking up to the right of the door.

Kelly formed up behind me facing the stairs we had come from,

standard covering procedure for a door entry, two attacking, and one covering.

On the count of three we burst in, Kez flanked out to the right as I flanked left checking the corners, Kelly backed up to the door before turning and bursting in, hitting the close switch on the door as she came in.

"Clear left!" I shouted.

"Clear right!" Kez boomed back.

"Clear!" Kelly.

The room we had just burst in to was evidently the eating hall for this level, plates of half eaten meals long since gone mouldy sat on tables, glasses sat stained with the former contents they had contained. There were jackets and lab coats draped on the backs of some seats, adding to the eerie atmosphere.

"Hey Steve over here," Kez called out.

I walked over to see what he wanted and there it was. A blood trail as if someone had been dragged off, leaving smeared blood all over the floor in the direction whoever it was had been taken. The trail led to a storage closet, the door shut.

"Open that door!" I shouted, lining my gun up to it.

Kez skirted along the wall up to the door and gave me a nod. With that he whipped open the door. It was a tiny room, the shelves filled with cleaning products and the like but it was what was on the floor that was worrying.

A fully skinned corpse lay there, decomposing. Evidently female from the body shape but no skin at all, as if someone had taken a peeler to it and just slid it off. Even more worrying, it was relatively fresh, meaning for one the facility had people inside working on something or trying to steal something and two, there was something in here that liked the taste of human flesh.

"oh jesus Christ," Kez said stepping back gagging.

"Yeah not a pretty sight , but we have to be on point, there is something down here that just isn't right," I said "any ideas Kelly?"

"None, I was told this was just a computer based complex, nothing like this," She informed me.

"Right, well we are right in the shit again then! Just what we needed!" I spat out angrily.

As we stood in the room looking around there was a sudden bang and noise from the far end where the doors were that we would soon be heading through. The far side was dark, the lights that end not really working all that well so our view was somewhat obscured by that. Kez moved over there already sighting his gun on the place where the noise came from.

"Who's there?" Kez called out. Nothing not a reply, "I said who is there?"

There was still silence.

"I will fire on sight if you do not come out, I say again, who is there?" Kez now

As he took a couple more steps that is when the most amazing yet scary thing happened. Kez had taken no more than a couple of steps when this invisible force sent him flying back toward us, slamming down and across a table before finally falling down onto the ground, his rifle skidding across the floor from him as it too followed him through the air. That's when this blood curdling roar erupted.

"Shit, find cover!" I yelled, shoving Kelly behind one of the food counters, just as something smashed the tiled floor where she had been standing.

I turned placing 3 round bursts roughly a meter apart, trying to hit whatever the hell it was that had just hit my best mate and gone after my sister. I hit nothing, for something with a lot of power it was damn good at keeping itself concealed.

"Kez get up man!" I screamed, but got no reply, Kez was out cold just from the pure force of the hit, "Fuck it!"

Just as it turned from giving Kez a quick look, the beast appeared briefly in front of me, I had no time to react and the thing ploughed into me. In the chaos I managed to grab onto something on it, it's hair or fur, I don't really know but I was clinging on.

It threw me off after flailing wildly seeming angered at my ability to attach myself to it. As I fell to the floor it turned and glared at me, roaring and pounding the ground with its hands or paws. On the paws it became evident what had skinned the young girl in the closet, it had razor blade things for claws and my god they were lethal.

It reared up above me and that was when I realised my gun was across a few tables from me and that I was pinned beneath some chairs. I squirmed desperately trying to move myself but in doing so I just got more stuck. I looked up the beast sort of smirking as it now was fully on its hind legs. I could only swear repeatedly.

Bang. I was blinded. A searing white light and a loud noise instantly erupted right in front of my face, I didn't know if I had passed to the other side or what but my god I was confused. The ringing in my ears began to die down, as it did so gunfire became clearer. My Visr device had cut out a lot of the bright light and was allowing my eyes to readjust again, and I could just make out the beast being pummelled with rounds, I looked left and saw Kelly letting rip with immense accuracy I didn't think she was capable of.

The beast didn't seem to phased but it retreated behind another food counter a bit further along.

"Get up!" Kelly screamed, fuelled by adrenalin, "I said get the fuck up Steve!"

I pushed myself free, quickly grabbing my SMG from the floor and went after the beast. I turned behind the food counter expecting to find it, but it wasn't there. Invisible again I assumed but how the hell can a beast have a cloaking device? It didn't matter what did matter was finding and killing it.

Kez stood up across from us, leaning on the table and that is when it happened again but this time he was slashed across the chest before being tossed through the air like a rag doll. This time he was sent flying into me, I cushioned his fall as best I could but we both ended up sprawled on the floor.

Gunfire rang out again, Kelly again sighting the beast before us and this time she hit the cloaking device on its collar, disabling it. It scampered again behind yet another food counter.

"Steve," Kez wheezed.

"I hear you buddy," I replied getting to my knees beside him.

"Just one thing," he said clutching his chest with his hands, "Give me your knife, that fucker scratched the paint on my new armour!"

I handed him my knife and his rose to his feet. The crazy bastard was going to take on the thing hand to hand.

"Kelly join me over here, covering fire!" I shouted, as she ran toward me.

"What is he doing?" Kelly asked me as she crouched down with me behind some tables.

"I think we are about to see him get mega pissed off." I replied.

Just as I finished the beast roared, seeing its pray. Kez meanwhile stood on top of a table in the middle of the room, he had removed his helmet and arm protectors to allow him to have more flexibility to use the knife.

"Come and get me you ugly bastard! Come on!" he goaded to the creature tossing the knife from hand to hand.

It roared and began its charge across the room sending chairs flailing through the air either side. At this time me and Kelly released a barrage of rounds though having little effect on the creature. It leapt through the air toward Kez from some distance and at the same time Kez suddenly sprinted forward toward it before suddenly sliding down the table.

The beast now was higher than Kez and as it passed over him, he drove the knife up into the belly of it, keeping a firm hold of the knife and slicing it all the way down, blood immediately gushing out. As it was still in the air as he sliced after he had pulled his hand away the insides of the creature also began to spill out trailing across the room. The creature roared once more before hitting the ground silently. Dead.

"That'll teach ya for scratching the new paint you ugly bastard!" Kez spat, throwing the knife at the creature burying it with accuracy in

between its eyes on its head...

TO BE CONTINUED!

## 11. Chapter 11: Even Deeper Depths

### \*\*Chapter 11: Even Deeper Depths\*\*

Kez took a few deep breathes, panting wildly, before approaching the sliced open beast that lay slain on the floor. He placed a firm hand on the Combat Knives grip and slid it out with relative ease, a blood like fluid dripping from the blade.

"Remind me never to piss you off," I said to Kez.

He said nothing just flipped the knife in his hands and held it out to me grip first. I took it and placed it back in its sheaf. Kelly meanwhile walked past me over to Kez who was now placing his armour back on himself that he had thrown to the side.

"Steve, scans suggest that beast was the cause of the multiple signatures, it seems that when Lieutenant Kelly hit its collar device it de-activated all the other signals. A confusion or rather a distraction built into its device to aid in its ability to hide." Chrystal informed me.

"Hm strange, how come we have no record of this nor any of the potential technologies in use here?" I questioned back to Chrystal.

"Well, it stands to reason with anything ONI get involved in there is an element held back from us that is for sure, however, from texts that I have on record, Dr. Luther Mann apparently found similar devices in some experimental Covenant technology that was acquired in the earlier stages of this war." Chrystal again informed me.

"Dr. Luther Mann, i've not heard of him, who is he?" I curiously questioned.

"He is one of the best minds in his field, possesses a vast knowledge of Covenant intellect as well as knowledge of their technologies. ONI and various other factions keep a close eye on his findings from various experiments but also information he has gathered from other sources." Chrystal reeled off.

"Sounds like someone we could do with right now, but alas it would seem this one is on us." I replied pondering.

By this point Kez was fully suited and now back to his usual self, somewhat calmed down from the anger filled man he was just moments ago. Kelly was locked and loaded, evidently keen to get a move on to the Core-Index.

"Alright guys, let's proceed, whatever it was is now gone, the other life forms that were being picked up have gone with it." I informed them.

We picked our way across the now devastated dining hall to the double doors on the far side. The lighting initially proving problematic

until my Visr adjusted somewhat to the conditions. We stacked up along the door, Kez leading the way in this time.

On the other side, a corridor stretched out, offices lining it. Evidently this was where all the privileged personnel were afforded their own quarters for any private matters they had to attend, most probably liaising with those in power at ONI who dictated the ebb and flow of most things in these facilities.

"Look at this place, I never expected this, it's as if we have walked into a normal tower block of offices back home," Kelly said out loud.

"Yeah, god knows what they were doing here, but if there are all those records on these systems, it must have been key to something." I replied.

"Rumour has it, there was some technology not of our own held here and experimented with..." Kelly trailed off thinking hard.

"Covenant?" Kez asked, chiming in.

"No and certainly not human technology either. Something else, something like Runner?" She questioned.

"You mean Forerunner." Chrystal spoke out, for the first time over comms.

"Yes, that's it!" Kelly exclaimed, as we proceeded to walk the lengthy corridor.

"And what the hell is, or, are Forerunners?" Kez questioned, slightly unnerved.

"Forerunners are a key instrument in the Covenants persistence in removing us from the face of the universe, let alone the galaxy. They are the beings that created that ring, the ring we came to call, Halo. Right now The Pillar of Autumn along with one of our finest spartans is headed for a crash course into it's very location, lest they know it. ONI has kept this under wraps, but it has always been a kind of guess works of sorts. We only know of it due to the Covenant speaking of it so freely," Chrystal explained, "The Forerunners are the race that designed and built these facilities, though what they are for we have no idea. Certain parts of their technology have also surfaced upon Earth itself, that is how we confirmed there was an existence beyond ours and the Covenant species."

"So what you are saying is, we could well be recovering vital information that the Covenant seek with regards to these... Forerunners?" I questioned, stopping for a moment.

"Exactly that. These structures, are apparently supposed to lead to somewhere where, if you listen to the Covenant, The Great Journey truly ends and everything becomes theirs. However, from experiments and research that Luther Mann and Henry Lamb have conducted, it seems there is potential for a device that could wipe out all life as we know it." Chrystal again explaining in depth.

"I guess that would explain why ONI don't want us, or anyone else for

that matter, to know jack shit about what they are up to. It seems they are only just scratching the surface and i'm guessing that most of their data is held up in these facilities we are tagging. I bet any money now, that Pelican we grabbed from that Cult has some information on it regarding this too." I retorted to the group.

"Well, to me it sounds like we have no choice but to make this mission a success then!" Kelly stated assertively.

"Damn straight, come on, stairs are just down the end there" I said nodding in the direction.

We all proceeded to the top of the stair well, the segments of steps leading further down, Sub-Level 2 awaited us. According to signage around the place, this was going to be a floor containing text rooms, with vast expanses of paperwork all carefully stored in alphabetical order. Kinda makes you think just what the Covenant could learn from all that, provided of course that they could read english.

Walking through the well lit room, shelving towered around us, the floor clear of anything, not even a single paper loose. Very well stored I thought considering the state of the Dining Hall. Perhaps, though, the scientists here appreciated their work more than their meals, who knows, and more importantly right now who cares?

A door became visible at the other end, the sign stating Sub-Level 3 above it.

"Well looks like there is only one way to go eh?" I asked out loud.

Despite the beast we initially encountered, this place was rather quiet and secure, it made me question just how abandoned, if abandoned at all, this facility was.

The door opened with a hushed whoosh and we stepped through. Typical human design, despite it being ONI, I always presumed they would have more fancy tech than anyone else because of who they were, but I was mostly left wanting.

We proceeded down the stairs in the same triangle formation as before, covering ourselves as we did so. A sign on the stairs stated this was 'The Gallery', which gave us all a sort of puzzled look as to what to expect once inside. One more flight of stairs and we were again proceeding into a gleaming, well lit room. This time Tech benches lined either side of the walkway, all pure white. Some had holographic images displayed still, all of varying creatures and also of various artifacts that none of us had ever seen before.

"Could that be Forerunner artifacts displayed?" Kelly asked whilst approaching one, analysing it carefully.

"No. That there is an image of a rare Covenant Prophets staff. A Spartan mission managed to secure one from a derelict Covenant Cruiser on one of our most outer colonies before it got glassed." Chrystal informed us.

"Fascinating," Kelly replied in awe of it.

I proceeded to walk down the room a bit more, now with more of an eye on what was displayed on each work station.

"Hey guys, over here" Kez called out to us.

We moved over to Kez who was also at a work station, but this one not only had a holographic image, it also had the actual item on the desk. Kez went to reach for it but I grabbed his hand back, holding it firmly around his wrist.

"Do not touch that, we don't know if it is safe." I told him firmly.

"Ouch, alright jeez, but let go of my arm, your grip is killing me," Kez clearly said in some discomfort.

"Sorry, guess I still don't know my own strength, Chrystal can you scan the item and give us some intel, maybe tap into their database here please?" I asked my fellow suit sharer.

"Of course," Chrystal gladly replied.

While she gathered the information she needed, I took a moment to appreciate the tidiness and cleanliness of the room in which we stood. It was spotless, not one dust spec either.

"The device of which you see before you, is unknown in origin. It was found within a group of highly guarded Elites that were taken out by a group of Spartans. Spartans Oscar-Six no less, the very squad both you and Kez encountered at the previous ONI facility. It possesses some power qualities, that when tested, we out of our ranges, but what it is for we have no idea yet. And I stress yet. It seems there is a lot of activity and investigation surrounding this specific device, as it may well be some sort of Key that could unlock the mythical creations created by the Forerunner kind, however a location for that has also been undetermined at this time. It is safe to the touch however and has caused no harm to any of the scientists in this facility, so it is believed to not be lethal in design." Chrystal informed clearly.

"So we take it?" Kez asked.

"Yes, store it in your other leg holster, making damn sure the Covenant don't get their hands on that!" I asserted.

Kez whipped it up off the desk and slid it into his holster, surprisingly a nice fit. As we turned around the far door which gave us access to Sub-Level 4 opened and a rather surprised group of scientists froze, staring at us, just as we did the same albeit with our weapons pointed straight at them.

"This just gets more and more fucked up!" Kez muttered to himself.

"Come out from the doorway with your hands visible, we will NOT shoot!" I bellowed at them.

They seemingly complied and moved into the room, the door shutting behind them. The all ambled along until they were just a couple of meters away from us all.



"What on earth do you think you are doing within this facility!?"  
what I assumed the lead scientist hissed at us.

"We have been dispatched to rescue an and all information collated in these systems on behalf of ONI. Right now, a cluster of Covenant battleships in the region of 36 cruisers and 1 unknown lurk on the outskirts of this planet. This is a rescue and destroy mission. My question is, what, in fact, are you still doing within this facility?" I firmly replied, making our intentions clear.

"Covenant? They are here?" The scientist replied.

"Yes, and i'd appreciate getting this mission completed." I again stated back.

"They told us this time might come... but... I didn't expect now, not this soon, the research is not nearly complete, this is so very not good." The scientist panicked.

"You knew!?" I questioned, my voice raised.

"Yes. Of course we knew, they wouldn't have such a facility without a failsafe plan, a way to save all that we have accomplished so far would they?" they questioned, and they were of course right.

"So, I see that we have two options available to us, one, we keep you guys here and carry on, or two, you help us and we get you off this planet, how does that sound?" I asked them.

"I'm afraid soldier, neither of those options are viable, you will need our specific DNA and security clearances to harvest the data of which you wish to collect for them, however, it will trigger a release of various security measures as it wasn't entirely designed to be extracted without consequence." The scientist informed me.

This information suddenly gave me a rather large feeling of unease.

"What does this mean? What security features are we talking about here?" I asked, knowing the answer would only serve to frustrate me further.

"You see, it will put the facility on a timer. 25 minutes to be exact. Extraction of the data will take 15 minutes total and by my calculations that leaves exactly 10 minutes to flee from Sub-Level 5 and up and out of the escape hatch, you see, it is simply impossible." The scientist sounding rather saddened by this. "But, you are no normal human, are you? You are special. So for you it may be possible to just make this work. What I can do, is give you access to all the systems, which will trigger the count down, which is enough time for me and my team to leave, as well as your companions, whilst you and your AI Chrystal collect the data."

"Steve, they are right, it is impossible for the others but for us... I believe we can achieve what is required." Chrystal chimed in.

"Alright. It seems that is the only option and one we have to chance

taking." I said trying not to let my nerves sound in my voice.

"You can't be serious!" Kez exclaimed.

"Kez this is bigger than us, get these people out, me and the lead scientist will activate the systems, Chrystal will extract the data as soon as it is activated. When this happens you take all of these people out of here and I will follow exactly 10 minutes after you guys, is that clear?" I instructed.

He paused, evidently assessing his options, before reluctantly nodding.

Myself and the lead scientist headed for Sub-Level 5, descending the various flights of stairs and rooms before us.

The room soon loomed ahead and my was it vast. It stretched further than the floors above, computer towers at least 10 foot high, all lit up wiring away covering every part of the floor. In the middle a raised island with what looked to be a main control panel and holographic monitors displaying the very internal workings of it all. It was the island we made our way towards.

"Before you ask, I am Dr. Charlene Stewart, lead ONI scientist for this facility. I know what you are thinking and no, I don't have access to anymore files in regards to that artifact your friend now has nor do I know what ONI are up to. I was stationed here simply to find out more and more about everything they provided us, no questions asked. You see, some of us, unlike others like yourself, we don't need to know everything, Staff Sergeant Hill, we merely want a means to make our life purposeful. Do you see? We were happy here, of course we were informed that one day we would have to follow this very protocol, most likely for the Covenants presence but it mattered not to us." She ranted on.

"But..." I got cut off.

"No, no buts, I am ashamed to admit it, but the work of which you are saving, will serve of little purpose to ONI themselves, we uncovered very little and what we did uncover well im not sure of what benefit that will have, but again, I choose not to question it. I would rather die here with my work than be spared and sent to some arrogant know it alls lab facilities funded for nothing but the mere control of the galaxy, but I signed an agreement that stated I must infact report back to HQ once done here. That day is today. Now stand back and let me activate this system!" She said, every bit of it with anger behind it.

She stepped up to the panel and pressed her palms down on 2 seperate pads. There was a click and then a beam scanned her retina's.

"Charlene Stewart. Lead Doctor. ONI. Cleared" an eery voice rang out.

She then proceeded to go through various panels until she got to the data extraction section. She proceeded to type in various codes and activation grants. Before an almighty siren sounded.

"There. The activation is done. Be quick, lest you die here with my

work." She said before sprinting off back the way they came.

"Alright Chrystal, get to work." I stated, observing the holographic screens stretched out before us.

Chrystal got straight work digging deep through it all and hauling it all into the internal storage I had embedded within the suits main core. Huge chunks of data all flowing from one hard drive to the next.

Up above the group were well on their way now, Dr. Stewart meeting with the squad. Kez and Kelly providing them with direction and a sense of urgency to move even faster as they all scrambled up the stairs, and onwards towards the hatch which now lay not far away.

\* \* \*

><p>7 minutes had passed, and I was growing impatient. I knew the others would now be nearly topside and I was only half way done.<p>

"Chrystal, anything I should know about this data?" I asked not really wanting an answer.

"Well it is all encrypted, it seems Dr. Stewart placed certain measures in place to stop us being nosey... that said, I believe I can crack it and take a look if you wish?" Chrystal replied.

"No, im sure we will find out soon enough, plus I dont want to risk an underlying security measure that fries the both of us, any way to speed this up though?" I again asked.

"None, it is set at a specific rate one which I dont have access to changing." She replied calm as ever.

"Alright then." I simply replied.

14 minutes had now passed and the group had just made it up the ladder they had descended just earlier, back into the jungle like terrain.

"This is Staff Sergeant Kezlowski, we have the package, requiring evac, over." he stated over comms.

"Reading you, Evac en route." the uninterested comms member at the other end said dryly.

"Come on Steve, hurry it up!" Kelly said impatiently.

\* \* \*

><p>15 minutes.<p>

"Download complete, lets go!" Exclaimed Chrystal.

I didn't need anymore telling, gun now stuck to the rear of my armour, I began running, and wow what a difference these upgrades made, I was moving but taking strides just as quick at double the length I had done before and I wasn't even needing to draw breath all

that much.

We were flying along, Chrystal had displayed a timer on the HUD which I was using to benchmark myself, by her calculations we would exit the complex with 1 minute 30 to spare, but we also had to get clear once above. We glided up the stairs 4 at a time, I swear I heard Chrystal murmur something of being impressed but it could have been me.

We burst through the dining hall doors, Chrystal's timing being spot on and out through to the hatch, across the runway to the ladder that lead out, a swift jump and I actually jumped halfway up the ladder itself, before quickly ascending it and out into the blazing day light.

There before me was a pelican the squad already loaded up, and I jumped aboard.

"ALRIGHT!" Kez yelled.

"yeah yeah keep your pants on, easy as you like." I replied.

"Wow, just what upgrades did they do again?" Kelly questioned, also gaining looks from the scientists, but they brushed it off.

"Pilot get us the hell out of here!" I demanded.

"Aye aye Sir" they replied.

With that the Pelican pulled up and into the sky above, my HUD's timer hitting zero, all of a sudden an almighty implosion occurred and flame, dirt, smoke and everything else erupted below in an impressive display, before a sheer white light emanated from the middle before the sound then hit. The whole area that was once a thriving Island was now enveloped by the sudden gush of the ocean cancelling out the initial explosion.

"Look at that... all that work... gone. Disgusting!" Dr. Stewart said, clearly angered, sat on her own just behind the cockpit of the Pelican.

I turned back around to look out the rear of the ship, the whole facility had been erased with a bomb that basically liquified anything in its range. It was gone and now looking back, despite the debris of earth in the water, it was just an Ocean. For all intents and purposes now you would never have known an island was once there.

The door closed on the rear of the Pelican as we exited the planet towards the UNSC Gorgon.

"ETA 5 minutes you beautiful specimens of life" the pilot chimed over the comms.

It didn't so much as get a reaction out of any of the scientific group. Kez though was smirking to himself.

We touched down and the Scientists were whisked away by official ONI people and the guy I had knocked out on The Bridge earlier, whom just glared at me whilst walking off with that team. A group of ONI

technicians whipped their gizmo into my suits core and extracted all the acquired data before they then left me to head off back onto the ship.

"Staff Sergeant Hill, please report to the Captains Quarters." a voice echoed out.

\_Great now what! \_I thought to myself.

I proceeded to the quarters knocking loudly.

"Come in Staff Sergeant" The captain firmly said.

I entered the room and he was sat there behind his desk looking rather carefully poised. I Saluted him and he returned it.

"At ease," He said, the door closing behind me, "Great work Staff Sergeant, however I am afraid we have had reports filter through, Reach is gone, other colonies are under attack and The Pillar of Autumn has gone down on some Alien structure..."

"A ring world, called Halo." I interrupted.

"How do you know?" The Captain questioned.

"Various information in the facility down below sir." I stated.

"Very well, well all hope is lost, there has been nothing from them and for all intents and purposes we have classified them all as MIA. It has now been made our priority to try and protect the home colonies, not least Earth. However that is not why I brought you here to my quarters." He said turning off any comms devices that were in the room.

"Oh, and what is sir?" I questioned, very much intrigued.

"Sit down and we will begin."

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>I was unsure for a very long time as to where i was taking this story, however now i have had a revelation it may continue! Stay tuned for Chapter 12!<em>\*\*

## 12. Chapter 12: Altering of Life Itself

**\*\*Chapter 12: Altering of Life Itself\*\***

I took a seat as the Captain moved around his desk to his massive leather chair, wondering what on earth this meeting could be about.

"I'm not sure how to begin this," he hesitantly said to me.

"Go on Sir, say it however it comes." I replied firmly.

"Son, we have had news regarding the fate of many people from Jericho, including that of your family," He paused for a moment, "I'm

afraid to say, the drop ship that picked up your father was shot down by Covenant forces, no survivors have been confirmed and as such, it is with the greatest of respects and sympathy that I have to inform you of your fathers passing."

"I... I... I can't, no, innocents all killed, but..." I trailed off, I had nothing to really say.

"My advice is to take some down time, we will re-distribute the team to compensate for such." He told me.

"No. With all due respect, the last thing I want to do is sit around and think about it, I wish to remain on the front line sir." I threw out at him.

"Well, a stronger man than I, very well, in some regards i'm glad that this is your choice." He replied throwing a file on the table before me.

"What is this?" I questioned.

"This, well, this is the latest and also last piece of intelligence received from The Pillar of Autumn, it shows certain locations of interest that we need to send a highly trained team to immediately." He informed me.

"I'm all ears." I replied.

The Captain flipped open the file and removed various papers, all filled with text communications and other such information. What was intriguing most was the fact that none of what I saw related to anything we knew about.

"This comes directly from ONI," He continued, "This right here is a fully deniable operation, you accept it and you get caught, we can no longer help you, though im sure you are creative enough to get yourself out of any situation the likelihood of survival from this one, well lets not even get into that."

"I guess I really have no option but to accept this mission, since i've already now seen the files." I replied.

"You would be correct, now, this mission is going to send you to places we simply have not charted, we know of the locations but we don't know what lies out there. You will not be alone however..." the Captain trailed off as if waiting for me to ask whom was coming.

"I guessed as much, will the others be brought in?" I asked.

"No. We want you to lead this. This is a no questions asked mission, you go, you achieve the objective and you get the hell out, at least, that is the initial plan. You are being assigned to a specific group, along with Kezlowski. Lieutenant Kelly is being re-assigned to another task force, which despite your relation, I cannot disclose, though I am sure you will find a way to find out." He said with a slight smile on his face.

"Just me and Kezlowski?" I replied asking, as if to gain a bit more insight.

"No, the group you will be joined with, they don't exist, at least not to anyone outside ONI. You will be joining the following members," He paused reading down the list, "Officer April Orenski of the planet Harvest, she is the groups Scientific expert, anything you need to know down there, she knows. Fresh Spartan Anthony Madsen, fresh from the marines, rather undistinguished, no notable achievements, keep note of him, he has people in high places and probably already knows more about you than you do of him, and is there courtesy of this."

"Duly noted Sir," I replied.

"Spartan Commander Sarah Palmer, former Marine, but by far one of the very best in the field right now. She will be joint lead on this operation from what I have been informed. Captain Veronica Dare of ONI Section One, she is the lead. Gunnery Sergeant Edward Buck, he is a senior ODSF along with his Alpha-Nine Squad member Dutch and then obviously yourself and Staff Sergeant Kezlowski both of you hand picked for this mission by Palmer and Dare. Buck also vouched for you, so there is a lot riding on you." The Captain continued to inform me.

"When do we link up?" I asked a slight eagerness to my voice.

"Well sometime around now would be great, wouldn't you say?" a voice behind me suddenly said.

I turned to face whoever had just chimed into the conversation, and there before me stood Gunnery Sergeant Buck, Captain Veronica Dare alongside to his left and to his right Commander Sarah Palmer, a sly grin across his face.

\* \* \*

><p>We paced down the long corridors of the UNSC Gorgon with a fair bit of pace, the trio in front of me side by side, Dare leading the way. We were headed for Ship Bay 5, a small side bay located toward the rear of the Gorgon. As we rounded a corner and through a lobby, Kezlowski slid in step alongside me from nowhere.<p>

"Excited?" He asked rather cheerily.

"Like you wouldn't believe," I retorted.

We all formed up into a lift, the trio in front of us, me and Kez squeezed in behind them with our bags of gear. The lift opened straight into Bay 5 and we all moved out and turned right, following the overpass along the very top of the bay.

"Nice view." I said to Kez, looking down upon all the ships in this bay lined up perfectly.

He just nodded as we carried on. We jumped on a small shuttle lift that took us down to the loading platforms behind a craft I have never seen before in any form.

"ONI Prowler, Stealth and Reconnaissance ship, in case you were wondering," Captain Dare spoke out without prompt.

We approached, the platform it was docked at, a team of Engineers

just finishing up any checks they had needed to make before hurrying off back to their control room. The Captain of the Gorgon stood at its entrance hatch, ready to bid us farewell I assumed.

"Ladies, Gentleman, Soldiers, on behalf of the UNSC Gorgon, I wish you all the very best in this courageous act, one that defies belief. It's a pleasure serving with you all, not least Staff Sergeants Hill and Kezlowski. Wish you the very best men, and come back alive!" He saluted us before leaving us to board.

Climbing into the ship, it was a little smaller than I thought it was going to be, but massively bigger than a Pelican or a Condor. Sort of like a mini version of the UNSC Gorgon just set out differently but with a few levels too it as well as mess hall, quarters, bridge and engineering.

We went to the Bridge, following the team leading this expedition still. Coming out the rest of the team were there, but a few very surprising faces also sat waiting.

Sat to the right was the initial team I had been informed of, Officer Orenski, Spartan Madsen and ODST Dutch. To the left however another team sat strapped in waiting to vacate the Gorgon.

"Hill, Kezlowski, meet Dr Henry Glassman, he is our chief researcher and mind in the sciences on this mission supported closely by Officer Orenski. Staff Sergeant Mike Ferrow, I believe you have already met back on Jericho and at the Helm, Pilot Yakov." Palmer informed us.

"Ferrow!?" I loudly questioned.

"Good to see you boy'o." He replied.

"Captain Dare?" Yakov asked out.

"Yes Pilot, what is it?" Dare replied.

"The Gorgons Bridge have asked us to delay 5 minutes, we apparently have further guests." He informed her.

"Noted, confirm wait." Dare instructed him.

He spoke away on the comms back to the Bridge, whilst Dare paced over to a control panel and started assessing various things. Buck kicked back in a chair alongside the ships captain position, feet up on the console in front of him, whilst Palmer just seemed to stand to attention near the entrance to the Bridge.

Myself and Kez sat ourselves down next to Ferrow and Glassman, dumping our rather heavily laden bags next to us as we did so. The doors to the Bridge opened and in came further guests. Admiral T'Bouge was escorted in along with a team of 5 Marines, a Ranger, alongside them came in Lieutenant Kelly and Claire suddenly dressed up in an Officers uniform.

I looked at them, then at Kez then back at them. As I did so we got a fairly disgusted look from Admiral T'Bouge who gave us a final dismissive look before turning to Captain Dare.



"Captain Dare, I see you have your squad assembled, some i'd rather weren't here..." He said to her plainly.

"With all due respect Admiral, they are the best of the best." She firmly informed him.

"Well, I believe on this occasion we have to agree to disagree, now, is there anywhere I can privately discuss with my team and select members of yours?" He questioned.

"Yes Sir, the briefing room is just through there." She said gesturing to the doorway to the left of the bridge.

The 5 marines were dismissed and were told to have some down time in the mess hall which they duly complied with. Kelly and Claire both followed the admiral, along with the ranger, clad out in full ghillie gear.

"You two, get going, you are required for this and you Doctor Glassman." Buck said still slouched back in his chari, evidently not coming with us.

Captain Dare finished up on a console and joined us, leaving the others on the bridge. Palmer conversing with her Spartan and Ferrow now sharpening his combat knife.

We entered the room, dark except for the long table set out with lighting directly above it. T'Bouge sat directly ahead at the far end of the table facing down towards us and the door. To the left in the nearest seat Lieutenant Kelly sat, now in a charcoal coloured uniform with a single gold and white stripe down either arm, the words ONI on the left side of the chest. Claire sat in a full Officers uniform, mostly white with black trim, her name with ONI also located beneath it.

The Ranger though stood in the shadows, firmly out of sight but holding a weapon, evidently he had drawn the guard straw for this meeting.

"Please, be seated." Admiral T'Bouge gestured.

We took our places, Captain Dare sat down to my left, allowing me the end seat facing directly at Admiral T'Bouge on the other end. Kez sat down to my right with Dr Glassman in the middle.

As we all took our seats, we felt the ship vibrate and it was evident we were now leaving the UNSC Gorgon behind, heading to where it was that we were destined.

"All, as you know as of this very moment, we no longer exist to the rest of the outside world. All of your records have been removed from general databases and firmly secured with the ONI Security system. Such as it has to be. The news is grave, and things have gotten out of hand. We currently have a research expedition that has dropped off the map, along with some valuable assets, the team also guarding them have dropped completely from any communications and we have no idea what is happening right now." The Admiral began with a very concerned look on his face.

"All we know, is that a portal of some kind opened up in the Gamma

quadrant and that was the last we heard of them. The research space station located nearby briefly popped up on our communications front but have long since disappeared also. We believe there are greater forces at work than just the Covenant here, so we are on a search for all involved." He paused, taking a sip of water from the glass in front of him. "Dare I say it, we fear they are already perished, but we need to know for certain as we cannot afford to let the information and artifacts they have fall into the wrong hands."

"This is where we come in," Captain Dare now speaking up, "You have all been chosen as you are at the top of your field in what you do, Kezlowski, Hill, your exploits and completion of various important missions evidently hasn't gone unnoticed as such, that is why you are here, Lieutenant Kelly is far beyond what we are capable of with even our own systems and as such she is our technician for this."

"Officer Claire Lambert, Hill you already know her, has just passed with very impressive results in her survival and combat assessments, in terms of fauna and the surroundings, she is likely to be the one that will keep you all alive through what is around you, Dr Glassman, as trained by Dr Mann and Henry Lamb has an encyclopedic knowledge of Covenant and Forerunner technologies and languages, as such he is the resident expert that will hopefully solve any parts of the puzzle we can't." Dare continued.

"Indeed and I assume the rest of the guys back on the bridge and elsewhere are the muscle when it comes to full on warefare?" I asked.

"You would be correct Staff Sergeant." Admiral T'Bouge replied.

I nodded in agreement, as if approving this, whilst also keeping a beady eye on that Ranger stood silently in the corner, the only member of the team in here not to be introduced.

"This is one of the finest teams composed of the finest individuals, so as you can imagine, ONI are expecting results to go firmly in our favour, we will reach our first destination in 3 days time, I fully expect you all to co-operate fully, that is all." Admiral T'Bouge dismissed us all.

We all exited the room, leaving just Admiral T'Bouge and the Ranger alone. The others had headed to other parts of the ship, though from the viewpoint it seemed as though we were headed for a pure black ONI Warship Class Vessel.

\_Oh joy, more of the assholes! \_I thought to myself.

More importantly I wanted to speak with Claire to find out what the hell was going on, I just couldn't get my head around it. Walking down the corridors towards the quarters I saw her, and approached her just as she entered the room. I startled her a bit but shuffled her into the room, the door closing behind.

"Claire... please explain to me what in the hell is going on?" I asked her seriously.

"Well, it is a very long story and I don't really know how to explain

it without... well..." She said trailing off.

"Without what? Lying to me? Using me? What?" I said losing my temper a bit.

"Well yes... not long after you saved me, they got in touch with me, said they were watching you from afar and that they were now acquiring me, to help them, to help humankind, but that they needed information on you first. I accepted because I thought I was doing right and besides it didn't really change anything, not how I feel anyway." She explained.

"So you spied on me for them, what did they even want anyway? I can't see what they needed to know that they didn't already, I just can't believe it." I stammered.

"They wanted to know what your mental state was, if you could handle the pressure, if you could handle your self and your emotions... I told them yes you could. Don't make me look stupid when all I've done is back you up." Claire said getting emotional.

"Alright..." I sighed, "Alright, but why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I knew you'd put up a wall, because let's face it you are hard headed." she said laughing a little.

She wasn't wrong, I was and I loved it. We hugged and kissed and I left her to get some down time, promising to catch up with her later that night. If you could call it night, in the void of space it was hard to tell sometimes.

My mind wandered off back to that Ranger lurking with T'Bouge, something unsettled me about him, but I guess a lot of people had developed a sort of darkness around them in the midst of this conflict. I ducked through a door and entered the Mess hall where the 5 marines were chilled out, couple playing the age old game of pool in the corner and the others kicked back on the sofa's.

Kez was at a table eating something that looked and smelled truly disgusting. I slapped him on the back making him jump and choke a bit.

"What in god's name are you chewing on there?" I asked him pulling a disgusted face.

"I honestly don't know, some traditional Bulgarian dish apparently." He replied muffled and trying to stop coughing.

"Well rather you than me, can't believe it will be anymore pleasant coming out the other end." I disgustingly informed him, "Where's Kelly then?"

"Oh she was here, she's been summoned to the bridge to help Captain Dare and Commander Palmer with some on ship systems, nothing that interests me, unless it makes a loud boom and kills things, in that case it interests me." Kez rambled on.

"Cool alright then, I'll leave you to it." I said patting his shoulder and heading off back in the general direction of the

bridge.

The ship was something to marvel at, that we were approaching, sleek, black and mysterious. That was ONI all over and somehow they had pulled that off with this great hulking ship that we were now docking with. The Prowler it seemed would be our main mission ship but I guess we were gonna call this one the mothership.

"Ah! Hill, glad you could join us!" Buck beamed turning away from Dare.

"Not interrupting anything am I sir?" I questioned.

"Not at all, I mean, not yet" he replied giving dare a quick glance before getting a firm whack on the back from her.

They went back to whatever they were doing on the consoles. Kelly had joined Yakov taking the seat in the co-pilots seat to his right hand side, I assume taking over control of the general controls that didn't involve flying the ship.

Ferrows had disappeared along with Orenski, Spartan Madsen and Dr Glassman, probably preparing to move onto this larger ship in front of us.

"Beautiful ship isn't she?" a rather well spoken voice asked just behind me to the right.

"I guess so, if a construct of impending death can be called such a thing." I replied noticing it was the Ranger from earlier, still fully clad in his gear.

"Anything to brings death to those who stand in the way of us, as far as I am concerned Staff Sergeant, is a beautiful creation, plus it saves me a lot of work in the long run too." he eloquently replied.

"I didn't catch your name." I said turning my head to see what he was doing.

"Major King, ONI Rangers." He replied astutely, "Nathan King, that is or if you should so prefer it Nath, King or anything else you can come up with, it matters not to me so long as I know you refer to me."

"Alright, well pleasure to meet you Major." I replied.

"Likewise, i've heard plenty and it is a privilege to say the least." He replied, standing briefly before quietly slipping away.

Our ship merely formed in with the massive structure ahead, docking in something of a gravitational beam that secured us alongside, and then a whirl of bright light and we were hurtling through slipspace, well this was the long boring part of the journey, so now was as good a time as any to head down to Claire and get some rest.

\* \* \*

><p>2 of the 3 days had passed us by, we were now firmly within reach of our destination and so far not even a blip. How long that would

last I wasn't quite sure but for now it was a welcome respite from the endless violence we had constantly been involved in. Claire had indeed gained an awful lot of knowledge, what environment we were destined to be involved in I wasn't sure but she had a broad knowledge of nearly every terrain which surprised me a lot.<p>

Kez had kept himself rather separate for most of this journey, mostly with Kelly when time allowed or cleaning his guns. He had a habit of doing that.

The marines were full of mindless chatter, sometimes I wondered how they even avoided not getting a few knocks from various people, myself included with the sly comments. They didn't like authority, well at least not until it was needed, so these journeys just fueled their disdain for the ever present hierarchy.

Yakov didn't seem to initially remember myself until I had a discussion about Jericho with Ferrows, which triggered a whole cascade of conversations always starting with \_'Remember when...'

—

Orenski, I had only seen when we first boarded, otherwise she had hidden herself away. Not the most sociable of characters it would seem. Each to their own though, I can't blame her, she really didn't seem like a full on warrior type, though I was fairly certain she had been involved in her fair share.

We were just finished eating when the destabilisation of us exiting slip space occurred, immediately there was a loud groaning sound and the alarms going off. Gravity seemed to leave us for a moment as we all got flung across the mess hall, clattering across the floor into chairs, tables and walls.

"Red Alert, Red Alert, All non essential personnel to their designated seats." the warning echoed out.

"What the hell now!?" Kez hissed.

"Well it can't be good!" I shouted back over the loud groaning sound, trying to stand whilst the ship violently shook around us.

I staggered over to Claire and hauled her up to her feet, gave her a pat on the back and then headed out the door to get to my quarters and get geared up. Somehow I made it, and in no time at all, with a few trips and falls I was suited, loaded with ammo and my weapons and headed to the bridge, the suit stabilising me somewhat.

I ran through the door onto the bridge, Major King was looking somewhat sea sick, gripping a railing trying to stand, nodding at me as I looked his way.

"Captain, what's the situation?" I requested.

"We are being pulled into some sort of vortex like hole, strangely enough we think this might be the cause of the others disappearance." She bellowed back.

"Do we know where it leads?" I shouted back, shifting my feet to again compensate for another gravitational pull on the vessel.

"Negative, but it doesn't look like we have much choice but to go through." She replied.

"Captain, the thrusters can't withstand this much longer, they are at maximum and we are still being forced in!" Yakov yelled back in a panicked and stressed tone.

Even the bigger vessel we were with was also being pulled in at equal force, so it wasn't just us, whatever this was, it was taking us all.

"All hands, brace yourselves! I repeat all hands Brace!" Lieutenant Kelly yelled over comms to the rest of the ships crew.

I looked across at the Major still gripping the railing, doing all he could not to look out the viewpoint.

"Not enjoying this Major?" I shouted across to him.

"I don't deal with motions like this too well, lets leave it at that." He replied returning to facing the ground.

"Grab a hold of something!" Captain Dare, bellowed now firmly grabbing the arm rests of the Captains chair.

I too grabbed a firm hold of the rail the Major was holding onto, dignifying Dare's gaze upon me with a reassuring nod of the head, trying to offer her some comfort that she was doing the right things.

The vortex was now dragging us in faster and faster, the ship straining now, thrusters over burning on both vessels. Whatever it was around this vortex was certainly not of human or covenant design that was for sure, finding myself enthralled by its deadly beauty. The research station that was here, was broken into pieces, some of it flying straight into the Vortex. If anyone was still alive on there, the vacuum of space would certainly get them now.

The giant gass planet behind both, seemed unmoved however, I guess that was much to do with its mass than anything else.

"Recommend we power down thrusters and let it take us, too much damage is being caused!" Lieutenant Kelly yelled out, as she did so a console to the left of the bridge fused out, extinguisher smoke now pouring down onto it to prevent a blaze.

"Affirmative, make it happen Lieutenant." Captain Dare directed.

Thrusters were killed, and so were the bigger warships. This was it, we were going in.

The ships were pulled in with ease now, the groaning remained, though far less than it was. In a way it was something beautiful to look at, but the impending fear of doom that it lay upon us was something that I doubt I would ever forget for a while. It was kind of exciting.

As we headed into the Vortex fully now, various members of staff grimaced, Yakov working feaverishly on the control panel trying to

keep the ship steady. Lieutenant Kelly had switched to just observing the controls, now rendered helpless.

Captain Dare's expression hadn't changed as serious as ever still, looking out firmly sat in the Captains chair whilst myself and Major King clung on for dear life.

And then it happened. The ships hurtled into the Vortex with such might a groaning of the Hull louder than ever rang out. Then all sound seemed to disappear, the only sound reaching my ears being my deep breaths inside of my helmet. Time seemed to stand still, for how long I don't know. It was like entering slip space, but, much much faster and for some reason, much quieter too.

The power flickered, I assume from the stresses now on the whole ship. Lighting flickering on and off, for random periods of time each time. Warning alerts were flashing on various panels and now Lieutenant Kelly was working away on her controls, buckled into her seat. I looked around and it all just seemed to be slow motion, nothing happening particularly fast or seeming panicked. Just. Happening.

Major King was also now looking up, seeing what chaos was unfolding and not long after I looked across at him, the whole ship went into darkness. Life support seemingly the only working functions now, it seemed like an eternity but then the emergency lighting powered on as well as a few key consoles. Kelly and Yakov both furiously working, Yakov desperate to regain some control of his vessel.

That was it. We were suddenly cast out of a Vortex in equal size to the one we entered, thrown into loose space, debris from the remains of the research station floating here too. It banged and clattered off the hull of the ship as we glided aimlessly through space.

"Engineering! Get the power relays back in action pronto!" Captain Dare yelled across comms, "Yakov do what you can to regain some directional capabilities and Lieutenant try and get the scanners back up and operational."

"Yes Captain!" They both chimed in perfect co-ordination.

Staff Sergeant Hill, Major King, you still holding up there?" Dare asked without looking back.

"Yes Captain, we are fine." I replied for the both of us.

On the viewpoint there were various masses out there, all very alien like.

"Chrystal, see if you can work out what they are." I requested upon seeing them.

"They are Forerunner in construct, Dr Glassman will undoubtedly confirm this, a home world I think, and one of the Ring constructs that we lost communication with The Pillar of Autumn on I believe." Chrystal informed me.

"Captain, this is a Forerunner construct, it all is." I informed her.

"Damn... alright, we need to be alert, anything can happen here, I have no idea what we are dealing with and im damned sure we will find out." Dare replied.

I nodded in agreement. Then a loud yes was hollered from Lieutenant Kelly and sure enough all lighting and systems re-engaged.

"Nicely done Lieutenant." Dare praised her.

"Scans show various constructs of Forerunner technology... wait... what?" the Lieutenant not finishing her sentence, furiously tapping buttons.

"What? What is it?" I shouted across.

"I'm picking up a UNSC distress signal from the ring, but also from inside of that planet or sphere, whatever the hell it is." The Lieutenant relayed.

"Are you positive it is coming from the planet and the ring?" Captain Dare asked.

"Absolutely, in fact it is coming from inside the planet. I am however detecting no human life signals but something is distorting my scans somewhat so I can't be sure." Kelly informed now turning to face the Captain.

Captain Dare sat and pondered for a moment. "alright, brace ourselves, we may well have to go in on this."

"Saddle up men," Dare said turning to face both me and the Major.

I looked at him as he did at me, acknowledging that battle quite probably lay before us. Rest was over, now it's back to what we do best.

End  
file.